the weekly
Standard

SEPTEMBER 13, 2004 $3.95

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the weekly Standard

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She's No Girly-Man

Republicans are meaner than Democrats, many observers believe.

Syndicated pundette Susan Estrich believes it, anyway. That's how "the arrogant little Republican boys who [were] strutting around New York" last week have managed to turn this year's presidential race around, Estrich explains in her September 1 column: Bush's minions have secretly contrived an elaborate "smear campaign" of "lies and half-truths" against a good and noble man, Sen. John Kerry. And Sen. Kerry, being a good and noble man, has turned the other cheek, declining to respond in kind. Nice guys finish last, as it were.

So the nicer guys might nevertheless—just this once—retain at least a fighting chance until the final bell, Ms. Estrich urges independent Democratic organizations immediately to begin spending millions of dollars on nationally broadcast television ads designed to alert the country to the true character of its current political leadership. For instance:

• President Bush and Vice President Cheney, Estrich offers, have "managed to rack up" something like "three, or is it four or five, drunken driving arrests" between them, a record suggesting that both men have "a serious problem with alcoholism."

• Estrich continues: "Is any alcoholic ever cured?" Put another way: "Has America really faced the fact that we have an alcoholic as our president?" And are we really comfortable that such a man has "control of weapons capable of destroying the world at his fingertips"?

• Also, think of "those who served in Vietnam instead of the privileged draft-dodging president, and ended up as names on the wall instead of members of the Air National Guard." Imagine an ad featuring their still-grieving mothers! "It wouldn't be so hard to find them."

THE SCRAPBOOK notes that the above-quoted essay comes complete with a little note attached to the bottom by the column's distributor, Creators Syndicate. Please visit our website, the company recommends, if you want "to find out more about Susan Estrich."

No thanks. ♦

Delegates Call Moore "Fat Pig"

Yes, that's right, reports the Associated Press: Michael Moore, "who attended [last] week's Republican National Convention as a columnist for *USA Today*, was greeted by delegates who derided him as a 'fat pig.'"

See, see? What did Susan Estrich tell you: Republicans are mean. Moreover, further confirming the Estrich view of things, experts consulted by AP reporter Jerry Schwartz worry that here, too, GOP mudslingers might prove not just mean, but effective. What if Michael Moore's feelings get hurt, by golly?

> The Republicans are "behaving exactly like the third-grade bullies who tormented me as a child," says Marilyn Wann, author of the book *Fat!so?* "Any time you invoke the f-word"—and here she means *fat*, not another f-word—"you're using an incredibly powerful weapon."
>
> "They're thinking this is going to hurt him more, this is going to hurt him as a person," agrees Sandy Schaffer, New York chair of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance.

Filmmaker Moore, for his part, "says he once was skinny, but put on weight in the 1980s when he lived on $99 a week in unemployment and subsisted on cheap, starchy foods."

Ronald Reagan was unavailable for comment. ♦

Neurological Activity from Johnny Apple

This just in: R.W. "Johnny" Apple Jr. of the *New York Times* reports that people *he* knows—you know: the best sorts of people—really don't like George W. Bush very much. Who'da thunk it? From the September 1 "Apple's Almanac," a spectacularly fatuous piece of self-parody that Johnny's editors at the *Times* naturally decided to run every day during last week's Republican convention:

> By now, it must be obvious to everyone that President Bush and the Republicans are about as good a fit with New York as Joe Torre and the Yankees with Boston. . . . Many prominent New Yorkers have simply left town for the duration; I know people who are spending convention week in Florida, Maine, Switzerland or Wyoming, or on Martha's Vineyard, among other places. . . .

Confidential SCRAPBOOK memo to Karl Rove: The "Hey, I know, let's go to Switzerland this week" vote? It's gone. Fuhgeddaboudit. ♦

An Important Correction from the *New York Times*

"A front-page column in [the Arts & Leisure] section on July 4 about the marketing of Bill Clinton's memoir 'My Life' quoted erroneously from a comment he made in 1998 about Monica Lewinsky. He said he 'did not have sexual relations with that woman'—not

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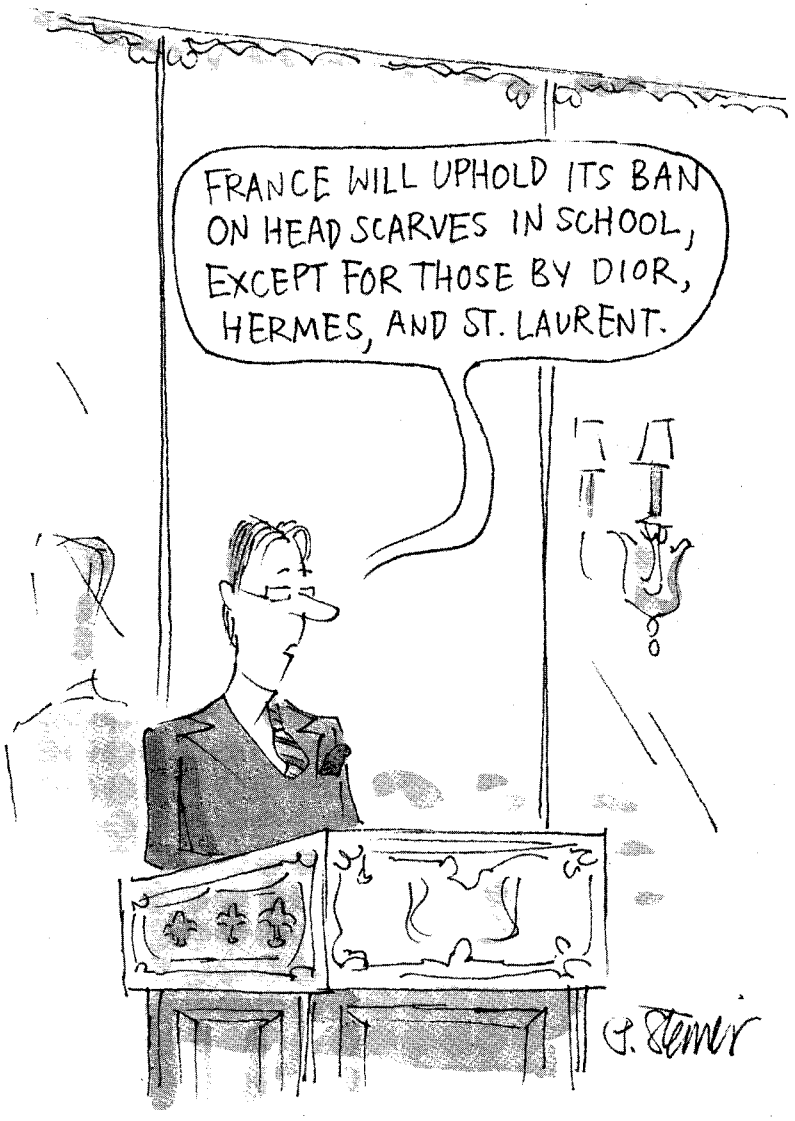

'never had sexual relations with that woman.' The Times was notified of the error on July 5; this correction was delayed by an editing lapse."

—Editors' note,
New York Times, August 29

So's My Mudda

Looks like somebody needs to update that famous *New Yorker* cartoon by Saul Steinberg, the one with a map of the world in which Manhattan looms enormously large in the foreground while everything farther afield than Hoboken, New Jersey, is reduced to the size of a pea. Steinberg was gently spoofing his fellow New Yorkers' characteristic blend of titanic self-regard and near-total parochialism. Most of which spoof still holds true . . .

Except that it turns out New Yorkers don't know all that much about themselves, either.

New York magazine last week reported the results of a poll about the city comparing answers from 400 local residents to those offered by 400 Republican primary voters from elsewhere around the country. Each group was asked what percentage of New Yorkers they thought were "Jewish," "black," "welfare recipients," "millionaires," and "gay or lesbian." And in each case, it was the locals who made higher-end guesses, thereby embracing every hoary stereotype about their city.

The Republicans, being of a more latitudinarian and worldly disposition, were noticeably less likely to see Jews and blacks and homosexual welfare queens under every Manhattan mattress.

Also, just for the record, the Republican guesses came closer to the truth. ♦

Boo hoo hoo . . .

Here are a couple of paragraphs from the lead editorial in last Wednesday's New York *Daily News* that we wish we'd written:

> Poor little protesters. Here they are, boldly come into the very heart of Fascist Insect Amerika to be glamorous street-fighting revolutionaries like Fidel and Che and those guys, and they end up getting handled like everyday garden-variety offenders.
>
> No hoods, no torture. And they're in and out of the court system in 23 hours, give or take, just like the standard prostitutes, petty pilferers and pill pushers who get processed through Manhattan Criminal Court. Darn hard to get treated like an important political prisoner in this town. This injustice needs to be protested.
>
> Meanwhile, your conscience requires you to cry out against whatever oppressions you've got to work with. In this case, well, these abusive jailhouse conditions are just shocking. No vegan sandwiches, just baloney. Nothing but Dixie cups to drink from. Small wonder they're all calling the holding cell "Guantanamo-on-the-Hudson." Where are the international human-rights monitors, Amnesty International and the like, when you need them?
>
> Boo hoo hoo . . . ♦

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Casual

Republican-Americans

New York

In 1999, a few weeks before I first left Virginia for New York City, a family friend gave me a piece of advice that has rolled around in my head ever since. He was in his seventies. He did not like New York. His view of the city, it is safe to say, was decidedly pre-Giuliani. "Here's what you do," he said. "First you buy a copy of the *Daily News*."

"Okay," I said.

He held his hands about six inches apart.

"Then you wrap it around a piece of lead pipe, about this big."

I knew where this was going.

"Then," he went on, "if anyone gives you any trouble . . . *Whack*!"

I spent four years here, in the Morningside Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, and never took the man's advice—never needed to, in fact. But I thought of him last week, as I read and heard about the nasty way in which some New Yorkers greeted the visiting Republican delegates. In some stories, protesters waited outside Midtown hotels, harassing the delegates on their way to dinner. In others, Republicans were booed and jeered as they walked the streets. Sometimes they were pushed around.

Usually dressed in hinterland casual, the delegates were easy to identify. According to the *Times*, one was punched in the face. Others were spat on. On Wednesday, as two colleagues left Madison Square Garden, they were joined for several blocks by an angry man in T-shirt and shorts who shouted, "Republicans, go home!"

It was always thus. New Yorkers like to think of their city as a tolerant one, but it is no such thing. Each new immigrant group makes its way through the maze of streets and smells and languages unloved and alone. The Republicans last week were no different.

For elaboration, turn to Harpo Marx, who once wrote a book about the city, a reedy volume titled *Harpo Speaks . . . about New York*, in which he described the immigrant's dilemma. "The worst thing you could do was run from Other Streeters," Marx wrote. "I learned never to leave my block without some kind of a boodle in my pocket—a dead tennis ball, an empty thread spool, a penny, anything." Harpo came to accept his situation. "It was all part of the endless fight for recognition of foreigners in the process of becoming Americans."

Darren Gygi

Republicans are already Americans. But in New York, they are Other Streeters.

They left too soon to assimilate successfully, I think, which is a shame. There are Republicans who live here, of course, but one likes to imagine what would happen if they all migrated to the same few blocks in SoHo or the East Village, and then, joined by their red state brothers and sisters, formed a vibrant immigrant community. (Staten Island doesn't count.)

Travel guides would point business professionals to the corner of Goldwater and Hamilton streets, where you could eat tasty barbeque and shop for books on the gold standard. There would be the occasional scuffle, to be sure, perhaps over the construction of a giant statue of Ronald Reagan overlooking the East River, and yet for the most part the Republican-Americans would slide into the easy anonymity of New York, and invite other New Yorkers to spend lazy summer evenings beneath a tree in Rudolph W. Giuliani Park. Zell Miller would feel right at home.

Yet the Republicans have left, and with them the hecklers, and with them, in turn, the bitterness that plagued the streets. And Republicans who live here will melt into the background din of the city, their elephant pins set aside for another day, the toothy smiles they flashed at members of the Missouri delegation replaced with the city pedestrian's glassy, half-vacant gaze, which sees everything but acknowledges nothing.

Every now and then, when I grew bored with work, I liked to walk from my building at 116th Street and Broadway to Sixth Avenue and Carmine Street in the West Village. It is a walk of about seven miles. I feel sorry for the Republican delegates, who, sequestered in their Midtown hotels this week, probably didn't take such walks. If they had done so unmolested, they would have taken in the great spires in awe, smelled the "gassy air" that Saul Bellow writes of in *Seize the Day*, walked over the "sawdust footprints," and, like so many other immigrant New Yorkers, joined

> the great, great crowd, the inexhaustible current of millions of every race and kind pouring out, pressing round, of every age, of every genius, possessors of every human secret, antique and future, in every face the refinement of one particular motive or essence—*I labor, I spend, I strive, I design, I love, I cling, I uphold, I give way, I envy, I long, I scorn, I die, I hide, I want.*

Matthew Continetti

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RED

- The South, the Great Plains, the Mountain West and Appalachia
- 35% of the population & 50 Senators
- Subsidized extraction industries agriculture, oil, gas, coal and forestry- and majority of military installations
- Pays 29% of federal taxes
- From 1991 to 2001, received $800 billion more in goods, services and cash from Washington than it paid in taxes
- Tom DeLay, Mel Gibson, Bill O'Reilly, Extreme Makeover, Lee Greenwood, Pat Buchanan, George Bush
- The Bible is the literal word of God: Yes 60%
- Nobel Laureates in science and economics: 23

BLUE

- The Northeast coast, the West Coast and the Great Lake States
- 65% of the population & 50 Senators
- Non-subsidized manufacturing, financial services and information industries
- Pays 71% of federal taxes
- From 1991 to 2001, paid $1.4 trillion more in taxes than it got back in goods, services and cash
- Barack Obama, Michael Moore, the West Wing, Al Franken, Bill Moyers, Dixie Chicks, John Kerry
- The Bible is the literal word of God: Yes 44%
- Nobel Laureates in science and economics: 235

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Swift Justice

As William Kristol writes in "Kerry's Band of Brothers" (Aug. 30), honest Vietnam veterans are, once again, getting slandered by John Kerry. In his 1971 Senate testimony, Kerry made a name for himself by trashing the Vietnam war and accusing his fellow soldiers of committing heinous atrocities. As Kristol notes, Kerry claimed to speak not just for himself—but for "a very much larger group of veterans in this country." This made his testimony all the more offensive. (Not to mention the fact that neither he nor his radical friends could back up any of Kerry's charges.)

But times have changed. Now, the very people who once opposed the Vietnam war would have us believe that a well-rounded résumé must include experience fighting in Southeast Asia. In fact, John Kerry can hardly complete a sentence without referencing that experience. And he wants the American people to believe it makes him uniquely qualified to lead our nation in wartime.

But more than 240 of his fellow Swift boat veterans disagree. They accuse Kerry of embellishing his war record and of receiving medals he didn't earn. Either the anti-Kerry Swifties are engaged in a vast conspiracy of deceit—which is highly implausible—or else John Kerry has some explaining to do.

Predictably, the knee-jerk vilification of these veterans has already begun in the mainstream press. Once again, a group of honorable Vietnam veterans are being immolated on the pyre of John Kerry's political ambition.

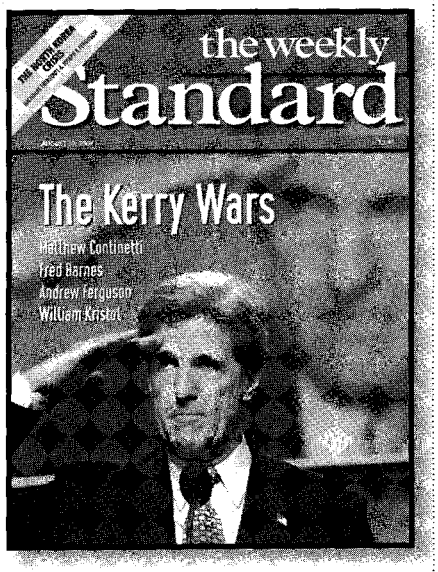
Thomas M. Beattie
Mt. Vernon, VA

The Mekong Election

I was disappointed to read Andrew Ferguson's "Marching to November" (Aug. 30) in The Weekly Standard. For a moment, I thought I had mistakenly picked up the *New York Times*.

While many conservatives surely wish President Bush had served in Vietnam rather than stateside, Bush has not touted his wartime activities to prove his ability to lead this country in the war on terror. It was Senator Kerry and the Democrats, not the Swift boat veterans and the Bush campaign, that put Vietnam front and center in this election season. Perhaps the Democrats thought emphasizing Kerry's Vietnam record would distract attention from his painful dearth of a common touch and his lackluster Senate career.

If Ferguson truly believes George W. Bush is not "personally or politically appealing," he is living in the world of September 10, 2001. Since 9/11, Bush has shown leadership and a moral certitude that will rank him in the pantheon of great American presidents. If any Republican looks at this administration's record and thinks otherwise, they should remember that horrendous day three years ago and imagine where we would be today if the party of John Kerry, Howard Dean, and (yes) Michael Moore had been in power.



Jamie M. Fly
Alexandria, VA

Andrew Ferguson misses the mark when he discusses Republican insecurities over George W. Bush's military record (or the lack thereof). Most Republicans *do* find President Bush appealing—both "personally" and "politically"—for the way he has led our nation in the war on terror. By and large, they do not need to "convince themselves" that John Kerry isn't a war hero in order to know that George W. Bush would make (indeed, has made) the better wartime commander in chief.

Regardless of the ongoing controversy, I believe John Kerry is a war hero. But there is a difference between war heroism as a Swift boat commander and wartime presidential leadership. Republicans realize this, even if the Kerry campaign and many Democrats do not.

Aaron Levisay
Sioux Falls, SD

What makes Andrew Ferguson think that most Republicans don't like President George W. Bush as their candidate? I voted for Bush in 2000, support him today, and sense that an overwhelming majority of Republicans love him.

For that matter, I served in the U.S. military during the 1960s, often beside Air National Guard officers. Their service was an honor to our nation; it was certainly not a cop-out. The conclusion Ferguson raises in "Marching to November"—that Republicans are uneasy about President Bush's lack of actual combat experience—is a red herring.

Brad Sandy
Carrollton, TX

Andrew Ferguson, as usual, is right on target in "Marching to November." And the "thinly disguised secret"—that Republicans aren't exactly crazy about George W. Bush—will peel off enough conservative voters to cost the president reelection in November.

Steve Mack
Arlington, VA

It must have been hard for a conservative such as Andrew Ferguson to write an article contrasting John Kerry's Vietnam-era service with President Bush's. But I thought "Marching to November" was magnificent. Thanks so much for publishing it.

Chris Charuhas
Frederick, MD

I thought Andrew Ferguson's "Marching to November" was the first truly intelligent commentary I have seen on the Kerry-in-Vietnam ordeal. It was, indeed, a breath of fresh air!

S.G. Briggs
New Orleans, LA

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The Vet Offensive

In "The Bloody Shirt Is Back" (Aug. 30), Fred Barnes writes: "Never has a presidential nominee run on the basis of his role in a war he *opposed*." This is only half correct.

In 1864, General George McClellan accepted the Democratic nomination under precisely those auspices. A section of the party platform, written by the so-called Peace Democrats, called for "a cessation of hostilities" in the Civil War. To be sure, after accepting the nomination, McClellan repudiated this position—thereby exposing a bitter division within the Democratic party.

Today's Democratic party is plagued by a similar rift. The War Democrats heard their John Kerry speak at the convention; but the Peace Democrats have found their own John Kerry on the campaign trail. At some point, the two Kerrys—one pro-war, the other anti-war—will have to be reconciled.

Martin B. Lavengood
Marlton, NJ

Reading Fred Barnes's excellent piece, "The Bloody Shirt Is Back," I am reminded of how highly Americans value a soldier's selfless sense of duty. We love, moreover, when this sense of duty is reflected in a politician's character. Senator John Kerry obviously realizes this.

But the duty of a soldier does not expire after the last shots have been fired on a particular battlefield, or after the war has ended. He has a continuing duty to speak truthfully about his service and the facts of the conflict after he returns home.

The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (SBVT) understand this duty. If they truly believe Kerry lied about his Vietnam record, they cannot remain silent. Kerry has made his four-month tour the centerpiece of his campaign. Duty thus compels the SBVT to speak out during this time of national deliberation. That duty should be respected. It is not a "smear" to report what one genuinely believes is the truth.

Now, it is the duty of American journalists to investigate the relative veracity of the competing claims (those of Kerry and those of the SBVT). Thanks to Fred Barnes for framing the issue in its proper perspective. I hope other journalists will similarly rise to the challenge.

Paul Deignan
Lafayette, IN

Kerry in Combat

I appreciate Matthew Continetti's probing of John Kerry's Vietnam record ("The Kerry Wars," Aug. 30). But his analysis is ultimately too timid.

Indeed, Continetti provides an incomplete report of the evidence. He gives the accusations of the anti-Kerry Swift boat veterans short shrift. To take just one example: the circumstances under which Kerry won his Bronze Star.

Factual disputes about the particulars of a 36-year-old firefight or combat action can be difficult to resolve. But the Swifties present a compelling case that Kerry did not deserve his Bronze Star, which was awarded for his pulling Army Green Beret Jim Rassmann from the Bay Hap River while under enemy fire.

The Swifties claim there was no hostile fire. Kerry and Rassmann claim otherwise. But instead of engaging the Swifties' arguments in his piece, Continetti merely dismisses them, writing, "The documentary evidence available so far backs Kerry's story." While records show that Lt. Larry Thurlow's boat had three bullet holes in it following the Rassmann incident, the anti-Kerry Swifties say there were not any bullet holes in the other boats present. If Viet Cong had in fact ambushed the men, wouldn't all the Swift boats have been riddled with bullets?

To be sure, the Swifties may be wrong about this incident, and others. But their account deserves equal treatment. Indeed, if the press pursues this story with the vigor it merits, John Kerry will regret making his Vietnam service the cornerstone of his campaign. Maybe he already does.

Ashby Camp
Tempe, AZ

After finishing Matthew Continetti's "The Kerry Wars," I am left wondering whether he thinks John Kerry's murky Vietnam record is, or is not, an important campaign issue.

Yes, Kerry may have fudged the truth about his alleged Cambodia mission of December 1968. But, as regards the 2004 presidential election, so what? Does the Cambodia story render John Kerry any more unfit for command than President Bush, who didn't volunteer for Vietnam, and indeed used his father's connections to avoid going at all? That's the question conservatives need to answer.

R. Scott Rogers
Amsterdam, Netherlands

In "The Kerry Wars," Matthew Continetti takes great pains to seem evenhanded, and he deserves praise for that. But he misses the underlying irony of the whole Swift boat affair.

When old grudges and political biases are combined with the inevitable "fog of war," they make the truth of what may or may not have happened in Vietnam nearly impossible to get at.

But certain facts are irrefutable. Because of their privileged backgrounds, neither John Kerry nor George W. Bush *had* to fight in Vietnam. But one did and the other didn't. So, today, one is a war hero and the other isn't. And the fact that the war hero's military record is now under such rabid partisan scrutiny is unconscionable.

Darin Strauss
Brooklyn, NY

Matthew Continetti's article, "The Kerry Wars," was noteworthy for its objectivity. It's rare for a journalist covering the Swift boat story to show such detached balance and evenhandedness. But the American public deserves to hear both sides of the controversy.

Sybil Hopkins
Oklahoma City, OK

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the weekly Standard

The Majority Party

Fortunately, we had a resolute president named Truman, who, with the American people, persevered, knowing that a new democracy at the center of Europe would lead to stability and peace.

George W. Bush, at the Republican convention

Those policies—containing communism, deterring attack by the Soviet Union, and promoting the rise of democracy—were carried out by Democratic and Republican presidents in the decades that followed.

Dick Cheney, at the Republican convention

It was Democratic president Harry Truman who pushed the Red Army out of Iran, who came to the aid of Greece when Communists threatened to overthrow it, who stared down the Soviet blockade of West Berlin by flying in supplies and saving the city. . . . [O]ne-half of Europe was freed because Franklin Roosevelt led an army of liberators, not occupiers.

Zell Miller, at the Republican convention

In a time of deep distress at home, as tyranny strangled the aspirations to liberty of millions, and as war clouds gathered in the West and East, Franklin Delano Roosevelt accepted his party's nomination by observing . . .

John McCain, at the Republican convention

Whose party was it in New York last week, anyway? Bush, Cheney, Miller, and McCain mentioned Franklin Roosevelt a total of seven times and Harry Truman twice—always favorably. John Kerry, John Edwards, Barack Obama, and Bill Clinton, speaking in comparable slots at the Democratic convention, mentioned Truman not at all and Roosevelt a grand total of once, when the presidential nominee announced, "So now I'm going to say something that Franklin Roosevelt could never have said in his acceptance speech: Go to *johnkerry.com*."

So the break between the World War II/Cold Warrior Democrats and the post-Vietnam Democrats is complete. The Clinton-Gore-Lieberman tickets tried to bridge these two camps, and succeeded, at least electorally: In 1992, 1996, and 2000, somewhat hawkish and interventionist, more or less pro-first Gulf War Democratic tickets won popular pluralities for the first time since Vietnam (with the exception of the narrow victory Watergate gave Jimmy Carter in 1976). In governing, the Clinton-Gore team also tried to bridge the two tendencies in their party.

The bridge was blown up by Iraq, and by the early success of Howard Dean. Dean imploded, and John Kerry—the next most dovish of the serious candidates—was there to pick up the pieces. A dove who was a Vietnam vet—how politically perfect! He could win the Democratic nomination *and* the general election. Or could he? Kerry's dovishness may well go too deep for general election voters. He opposed the first Gulf War. Before that, he was a leader in the fight against Reagan's Central America policy, and against Reagan's defense buildup. Even earlier, in 1971, he had linked his call to cut and run from Vietnam to an indictment of "the mystical war against communism" and of a U.S. policy that was "murdering" 200,000 Vietnamese a year. In 2003, he joined a few Senate Democrats to oppose the $87 billion supplemental appropriation for Iraq and Afghanistan.

No one believes these stances are in the tradition of Roosevelt and Truman—or John Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey. It is the alternative Democratic tradition of, say, Adlai Stevenson and George McGovern, of Cy Vance and Warren Christopher, that moves Kerry, and that now utterly dominates the Democratic party.

Which means the Roosevelt-Truman tradition is there for the taking. President Bush can follow up on the success of his convention by moving to take it. He can start explicitly appealing to this tradition and its representatives. On the stump, he could discuss FDR, who also ran for reelection in wartime. Bush could liken his task at the beginning of the war on terror to that of Harry Truman early in the Cold War (he might want to do this in the swing state of Missouri). Bush could quote John Kennedy. He could pay tribute to Scoop Jackson (say, in the swing state of Washington).

A minority party becomes a majority party by absorbing elements of the other party, changing them and itself. On taxes and crime and welfare, the GOP has won over much of FDR's working class, while adjusting its stance to the welfare state. On social and cultural issues, the GOP has won over God-fearing Democrats while modifying its cultural disposition. Now is the moment to complete the realignment by embracing a robust and bipartisan patriotism. And there is the advantage that Ronald Reagan (a former Democrat) has already shown the GOP how to do this—how to be an all-American party, as it were, proud of American principle and willing to use American power.

This is, after all, the core of Bush's foreign policy. It is what divides Bush and Kerry. To frame the choice in a big way—and then to win big—could make 2004 more than a transient electoral victory. It could establish the Republicans as a real majority party—as the Roosevelt-Reagan party, as the Truman-Bush party—with a governing majority and a governing doctrine that could shape America's future.

—*William Kristol*

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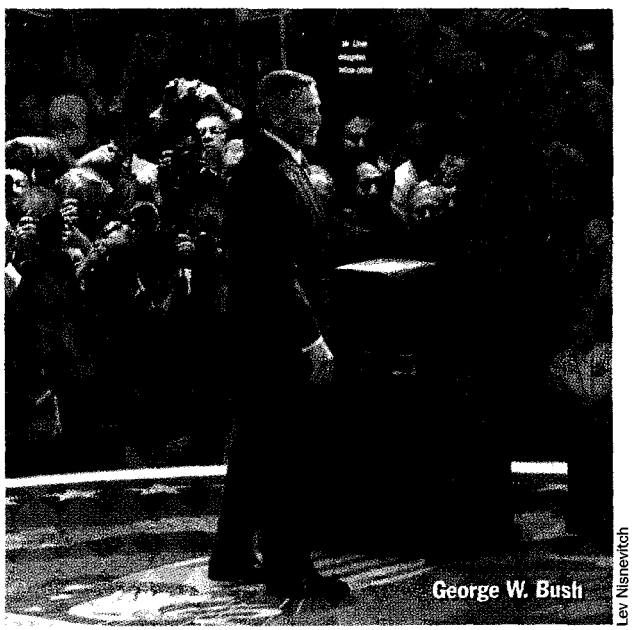
Bush Takes Manhattan

The president leaves his New York convention in command of the race. BY FRED BARNES

THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE consists of two campaigns. One concerns who would be the better commander in chief in the war on terrorism. President Bush, bolstered by speech after speech at the Republican convention (including his own), is handily winning that race. The other, the campaign John Kerry prefers, is about jobs and health care and education. With the stronger job numbers for August released the day after the convention, Bush is holding his own in that campaign too. So there's no escaping the fact: The race really is Bush's to win, perhaps comfortably.

Kerry won't have an easy time making up ground he lost since the Democratic convention in late July. It's clear now his theory of the campaign was wrong. A majority of Americans *haven't* basically decided against giving Bush a second term. Thus it's not enough for Kerry to demonstrate simply that he's competent to be president. The bar isn't that low. Kerry will have to be far more appealing than he's ever been to scoot past Bush. Or the president will have to screw up badly. Both are possible, especially the latter.

Flailing and hiding aren't the answers for Kerry. He responded to the Republican convention with wild and inaccurate charges. Vice President Cheney, he said, had called him unfit for office. Not true. His patriotism had been questioned. Again, not true. Bush, Kerry said, was "unfit to lead this nation" because, among other reasons, he lets 45 million Americans go without health care. Not even close. It's health *insurance* the 45 million lack, and for a sizable majority of them it's a temporary or voluntary experience. Health care is guaranteed by law. Hospitals can't turn patients away. Hiding? Kerry refuses to answer questions about his Vietnam, antiwar, or Senate records, hoping those issues will fade. And they might, but Kerry is taking a big risk in assuming so. Addressing the issues in a press conference with sympathetic reporters, of which there are many, might work better.


George W. Bush

Lev Nisnevitch

A feared outcome for the Republican convention was that it would stop the pro-Bush momentum created by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. That didn't happen. Instead, the speeches by Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Zell Miller, Cheney, and Bush built on that momentum. Whose speech got the more favorable reaction? Bush's. Really. At 17 focus groups organized by Democratic consultant Bob Beckel in battleground states, voters were mesmerized by Bush, especially when he talked about the war on terror. At an MSNBC focus group in Cincinnati run by pollster Frank Luntz, 13 of 21 undecided voters jumped to Bush after hearing his speech.

The contrast between the Republican and Democratic conventions was striking, particularly on the matter of authenticity. At the 2000 Republican convention, the stage was filled with minorities, as if they constituted a huge bloc in the Republican party. That was fake. This year's convention, with moderate-to-conservative speakers who focused on Bush as a wartime president, was more authentic. The Democratic convention, obsessed with the military, Vietnam, and the flag, didn't ring true.

On domestic policy, Bush's convention speech and the 50-page "Agenda for America" handed out afterwards ("A Plan For A Safer World And A More Hopeful America") were important for three reasons. One, Bush emerged as a big government conservative in full flower. Two, he called for so many significant reforms (the tax code, Social Security, lawsuits, health care) that he is indeed the reform candidate in the presidential race. Three, Bush is also the change candidate. Kerry, by comparison, is a reactionary liberal.

As a big government conservative, Bush wants to use the federal government with activist zeal for conservative ends—and for a lot more. Libertarians will gag when they read the Bush agenda booklet. The words that appear

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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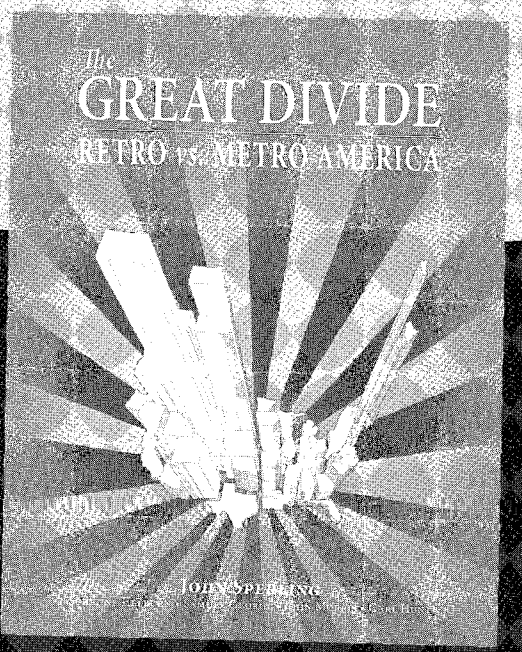

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most often in it are "increase" and "expand." Bush proposes to spend a fresh $1 billion on kids' health care and whatever it takes "to meet his new goal of creating 7 million new, affordable homes in 10 years." And he will "support the farm bill." There's no hint of shrinking the size of government.

The reforms Bush advocates make up the unfinished conservative agenda. He's endorsed many of them before, but this time Bush would have you believe he's serious. Perhaps he is. The boldest part is individual investment accounts funded by payroll taxes. The newest and most sweeping is "a tax credit for low-income families and individuals to purchase health insurance," that is, of a special kind: catastrophic health insurance coupled with health savings accounts to pay for doctor's visits. If passed, it could be broadened to cover all individuals and families, ending the costly practice of third-party payers for health care.

Reform equals change. In politics, you're better off as the champion of sensible change than as a standpatter. It leads to controversy, however. Bush is bound to be attacked for trying to reform Social Security. Though he insists benefits will stay the same for current or soon-to-be beneficiaries, he'll be criticized for jeopardizing the entire Social Security system. And Kerry may make headway with this among the elderly. Gore did in 2000, when Bush also talked of reforming Social Security. But what's the use of a second term if the candidate isn't going to take some risks? No change, no gain.

There's actually a third campaign, the barely mentioned values campaign. Bush made fun of Kerry for dubbing himself the candidate of "conservative values." But Bush himself soft-pedals the biggest values issue of 2004: gay marriage. He speaks in code, saying he'd protect traditional marriage, never that he's for banning gay marriage. Maybe this is clear enough for voters. When the president briefly touched on preserving old-fashioned heterosexual marriage, the convention delegates went wild—still another good sign for Bush. ♦

The Kerry Crackup

The Democratic candidate does a good Al Gore impression. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

IN A WEEK dedicated to Republican speechifying about why John Kerry should not be the next president of the United States, the most persuasive words came from a Democrat. And I don't mean Zell Miller's invigorating speech on Wednesday.

I mean John Kerry's rant in Ohio, less than an hour after George W. Bush finished his acceptance speech in New York. It's a shame the networks didn't include Kerry's remarks in their GOP convention coverage. In just 30 minutes, Kerry provided a revealing look at himself, a reminder of his meandering views, several clues about the state of his campaign, and a hint of what the next two months will look like.

Kerry sought to portray himself as an aggrieved but righteous politician, the innocent target of vicious Republican attacks. This is a substantial rewriting of history. Kerry and his campaign staff have been every bit as biting in their criticism—having, prior to this, called Vice President Cheney unfit for office and accused President Bush of using family connections to avoid serving in Vietnam. But the gamble for Kerry is not that reporters will point out the many harsh attacks his campaign has leveled at the Bush administration. The media wouldn't be so inconsiderate. The risk for Kerry is that in a campaign devoted largely to convincing voters of his strength, assuming the mantle of victim does little to inspire confidence.

"For the past week, they attacked my patriotism and my fitness to serve as commander in chief," Kerry complained.

Stephen F. Hayes is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

He later added: "Worst of all, George Bush misled America when he took us to war in Iraq."

That last line may have been the most significant one in the speech because it indicates that Kerry has veered sharply back to the Howard Dean/Al Gore/Michael Moore wing of the Democratic party. Kerry had largely abandoned the "Bush-lied" line of attack since admitting on August 9 that, in retrospect, he still would have voted to authorize the war in Iraq. That change of strategy prompted a pitched intra-party debate. Many congressional Democrats and party strategists pushed the Kerry campaign to trash Bush as dishonest. (It's worth remembering that 95 percent of the delegates to the Democratic National Convention opposed the war.) The Kerry campaign resisted. Their reluctance may have been born of Kerry's renewed endorsement of the war, his own history of supporting regime change, or perhaps even John Edwards's explicit rejection, last year, of the notion that Bush lied to get us into war.

"So did I get misled? No. I didn't get misled," Edwards said on *Hardball* with Chris Matthews on October 13, 2003. When Matthews asked Edwards directly if he got an "honest reading on the intelligence," the junior senator from North Carolina seemed to place much of the blame on the intelligence community. "I serve on the Senate Intelligence Committee," he said. "So it wasn't just the Bush administration. I sat in meeting after meeting after meeting where we were told about the presence of weapons of mass destruction. There is clearly a disconnect between what we were

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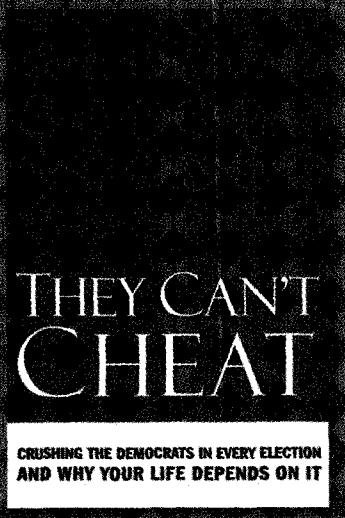

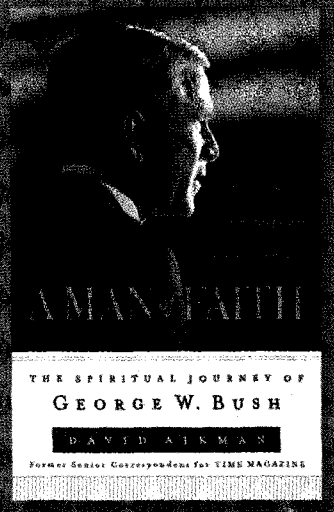

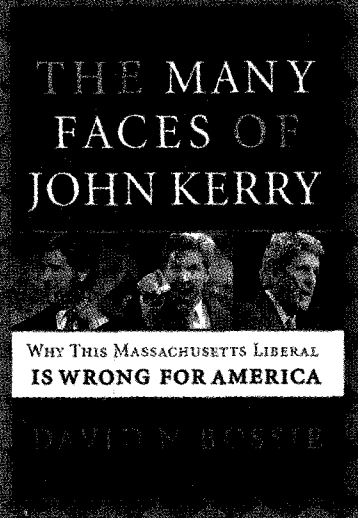

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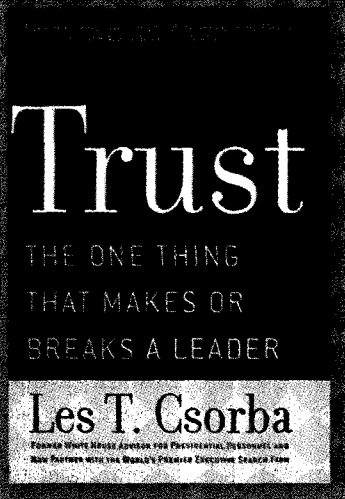

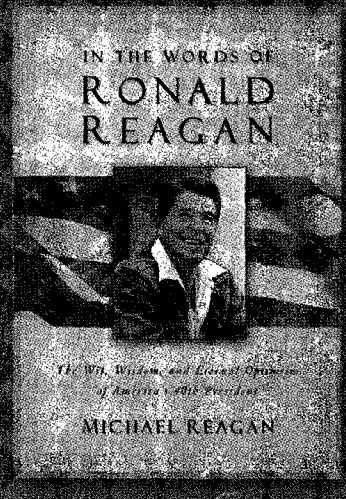

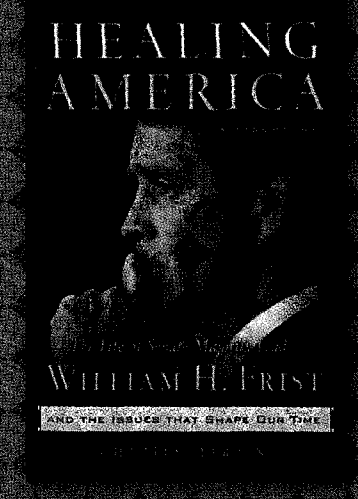

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told and what, in fact, we found there." Edwards's rhetoric was in some respects more alarmist than that of the Bush administration, describing the threat from Iraq as "imminent" and calling for the overthrow of Saddam long before Congress voted to authorize war.

The report from the Senate Intelligence Committee didn't help Kerry either. Whatever one thinks of the report in its entirety, its specific findings helped Bush politically by pouring cold water on the Bush-lied myth. It exposed Joe Wilson as a fraud, found that Iraq had actually increased its anti-U.S. terror planning in 2002, and provided a detailed account of how the intelligence community had reached its consensus that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

Kerry's own history on Iraq also complicates his making the case that Bush lied. It's tempting, but we won't return here to the list of hawkish Kerry statements on the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's Iraq. What we can say is this: From 1996 through the Iraq war last year, John Kerry regularly advocated the use of force, unilaterally if necessary, to remove the Iraqi dictator. He did so before the Bush administration even began to make its case for war. He was such a strong advocate of regime change throughout the late 1990s that Paul Wolfowitz once singled Kerry out by name as a Democrat who understood the Iraqi threat. Those days of consistency disappeared, however, with the election of George W. Bush.

And Kerry's speech last Friday was only the latest example. The content of the speech was reminiscent of Al Gore's recent vein-popping rants, although Kerry wasn't as wild-eyed in his delivery. "The truth is, when it comes to Iraq, it's not that I would have done one thing differently," he said. "I would've done almost everything differently."

Everything, that is, other than change his vote. John Kerry says he was misled into an unnecessary war. He also says he'd vote for it all over again.

Somewhere Karl Rove is smiling. ♦

Bush's Stealth Flat Tax

He's more of a tax reformer than people realize.

BY STEPHEN MOORE

OF ALL THE policy recommendations in the president's acceptance speech last week, none got more applause than his promise to revamp our antiquated and antigrowth IRS tax code. But even a mild cynic has to wonder whether this call for a "simpler, fairer, pro-growth tax code" was just a flirtation with voters. After all, every president since Jimmy Carter, who once called the American income tax system "a disgrace to the human race," has promised tax reform. We're still waiting—in fact, we've regressed: The pages of the tax code have nearly doubled in the last 30 years.

There are signs that tax reform isn't just a passing fancy for Bush, however. He's clearly intrigued with the possibilities of making history here. In early August, when he was asked what he thought of the concept of a national consumption tax, he replied: "It's an interesting idea that we ought to explore seriously." Right on cue, John Kerry protested that Bush had another bundle of tax cuts planned for Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and his rich friends at Halliburton. Kerry uttered the non sequitur that if Bush had his way, "families already squeezed by rising health costs and higher gas prices and college costs would have to carry a whole new tax burden." He left out the inconvenient fact that these families would no longer have to pay an income tax.

One advantage Bush has in this debate is that Americans don't need to be educated about the evils of our income tax system; these are well established. Americans spend more than six billion hours a year complying with the tax code, just figuring out how much they owe. That is more man hours than are used to build every car, van, truck, and airplane manufactured in America. Harvard economist Dale Jorgenson has estimated that shifting from our current graduated tax system with its multiple layers of taxes on saving and investment to a flat-rate tax on consumption would permanently increase national income by about 5-10 percent. Those are massive economic gains that would raise average family incomes in the United States by several thousand dollars a year.

One reason to think that Bush may succeed where flat-tax advocates like Dick Armey and Steve Forbes failed is that there's been great success with flat-tax systems elsewhere. Hong Kong has long had a 15 percent flat tax and has enjoyed perhaps the highest growth rate of any nation on the globe over the past 40 years. There was worry that the flat tax would be swallowed up by the Chinese tax system when Hong Kong was given back to the mainland. Just the opposite has occurred. The capitalistic impulse of the Chinese has led the mainland to move toward Hong Kong's system, through tax-rate reductions and saving and investment incentives.

And of course, Russia under Putin famously installed a 13 percent flat tax that has helped launch an epidemic of entrepreneurial activity and growth. Incidentally, for

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those skeptics who believe that the flat tax is economic fool's gold, consider that despite its well-known gangster and crony afflictions, the Russian economy has nonetheless grown at an average rate of 8 percent since the flat tax was adopted, and the *Wall Street Journal* reports that Russia now collects more tax revenues with a 13 percent rate than it did when the rates reached 70 percent.

But here's the other reason to think that Bush is committed to a radical simplification and overhaul of the tax system. There's been a rhyme and reason behind the three tax cuts that the Bush administration has already implemented. With each incremental change to the tax code that President Bush has put in place, or has proposed, we take another leap toward a flat-rate consumption tax system. I call this Bush's stealth flat-tax plan.

Consider the four goals of tax reform: (1) to flatten tax rates so that disincentives on productive and wealth-enhancing activities are minimized; (2) to eliminate double taxation of saving and investment so as to get more of both; (3) to simplify tax compliance to reduce the dead weight loss of the tax system; and (4) to get the intrusive IRS out of our lives to the fullest extent possible.

Now consider the actions Bush has already taken. First, he has chopped tax rates, thus moving toward a single flat-rate system. Second, he reduced the death tax, which is probably the most antigrowth tax of all, because it is levied entirely on accumulated savings and encourages seniors with wealth to spend it down to zero. Bush has also dramatically lowered the tax rate on capital gains and dividends to 15 percent. Under a flat-consumption tax, there would be no direct tax on dividends and capital gains. Any proceeds from stocks would be taxed when the money earned was spent.

Bush's latest plan is perhaps the biggest leap of all toward a flat tax. The White House has proposed a dramatic expansion of tax-free IRA-type retirement accounts. This means that large pools of savings by American households would no longer be double taxed. Now imagine that we allowed *all* savings that Americans stashed away into an IRA account to be sheltered from the IRS. Under that model we would tax income, but savings would be deducted. All that leaves to be taxed is what people consume out of their income (because income minus savings equals consumption). Now the picture starts to come into focus. George W. Bush and his economics team are quietly moving toward a flat-rate consumption tax system without anyone much noticing.

Now for the bad news. The hard part is still left to be done. What many Americans want most from tax reform is clarity and simplicity: They want the postcard tax return, or, better yet, no tax return at all. What forever trips up every politician when it comes to tax reform is the grand compromise: to get a low flat-rate tax requires a broadening of the tax base. This means sweeping away the reams of special interest tax loopholes that pollute the tax code. These tax carve-outs—for everything from housing to child-care expenses to investment in bull sperm and tobacco farming—leave in place a Swiss cheese tax system wherein two families with equal incomes can have vastly different tax payments. A few years ago an exotic dancer gained notoriety for taking a tax deduction for the cost of her breast enlargements, because this was a business write-off. That was no more absurd than Bill Clinton's taking a charitable deduction for underwear and other old clothes he donated to Goodwill.

Economists have calculated that if all these absurd loopholes were closed the federal tax rate could be chopped to about 18 percent and the same amount of revenues would be raised. To protect poor people from paying higher taxes, the first $10,000 to $15,000 of income would not be taxed.

To be sure, there are mountainous

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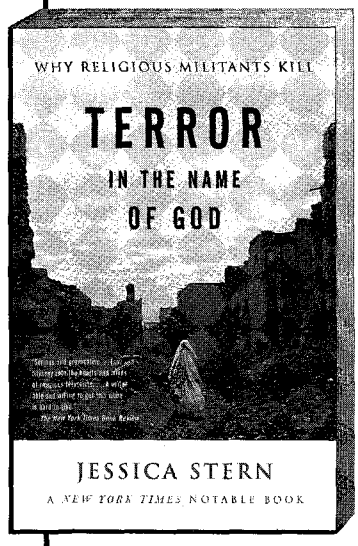
—*New York Times Book Review*



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political forces aligned to preserve and protect the current tax policy with all its special favors to gold-cufflinked K Street corporate lobbyists. For example, when Steve Forbes campaigned on the flat tax in his 1996 presidential bid, the housing industry spent millions of dollars on a scurrilous campaign full of half truths to discredit the flat tax. Whether George Bush has the spine to combat this murderers' row of influential Washington interest groups is anyone's guess. The flat tax is the ultimate fight of the general interest versus the special interest, or, to put it differently, Washington versus America. Alas, Washington usually prevails in these fights.

But if George W. Bush wants a grand and lasting domestic legacy, other than being the biggest-spending president since FDR, this may be his opportunity to make the history books. He can campaign and win on the idea of creating a 21st-century tax system designed to allow America to compete and win in the global economy. Imagine a flat tax of 18 percent with no double tax on savings, no capital gains tax, no dividends tax, no death tax, a postcard return that takes 30 minutes to fill out, and legions of tax lawyers and accountants out of our lives. This would be rocket fuel for the U.S. economy. And there is no reason it can't be accomplished with Democratic votes. Prominent flat-tax advocates in recent memory include Democrats like Jerry Brown, who nearly won the Democratic nomination for president in 1992 with a flat-tax agenda, and Leon Panetta, Bill Clinton's chief of staff.

On the back wall of my office is a copy of an old Peanuts cartoon. Snoopy sits atop his doghouse and taps out a letter on his typewriter: "Dear IRS: Please take me off your mailing list." That's the way tens of millions of Americans feel. If Bush can fix our Byzantine tax system, and prevail where so many others before him have failed, there is almost no enemy—foreign or domestic—he can't conquer. ♦

Chasing the Dragon

Among the protesters.

BY MATT LABASH

New York

I USED TO THINK that there was nothing wrong with street activists that a good scrubbing and a few rubber bullets couldn't fix. But that was before I met Adam Eidinger on the sidewalks of Washington, D.C. The first time I saw him in 2001, he stood nine feet tall. He was on stilts, and hadn't quite gotten the hang of them yet. He was scraping his glasses on tree branches and risking impalement on SUV antennas. But Adam kept at it to advertise an upcoming inaugural protest. "We don't want to yell at Republicans, we want to engage them," he said.

I hung out with his people, then wrote them up in snarky fashion. His comrades sent me several irate letters. But Adam, who runs his own progressive public relations collective, never complained. He just kept on calling me every time nuclear weapons needed to be abolished or hemp regulations needed to be relaxed. Adam, it seemed, would not be deterred. Adam *believes*.

We arranged a reunion on the streets of Manhattan for the mass protest of the Republican convention. Now 30 years old, the former Eagle Scout and Naval Academy aspirant has been through seven arrests and countless court dates. He's had handcuffs affixed so tightly by D.C. police that he couldn't feel his thumb for a month. He says he was dragged by his hair and beat up by Philadelphia cops when he wouldn't give them his name once in custody, after undercover officers infiltrated his puppet warehouse at the 2000 Republican convention. ("I should've seen it," he says, kicking himself. "They were all burly guys who ate cheeseburgers among all these emaciated vegans.") But he is still at it, as he has been since the antiglobalization movement created a permanent underclass of free-range activists in the late 1990s. Today, Adam is not the stilt-walker. He is the "Dragon Master." He is overseeing the operation of a gigantic papier-mâché dragon, called, rather inelegantly, the "Dragon of Self-Determination." As dragon names go, it's no "Puff," but it's all about the message.

Requiring around 15 people to operate it, from its fly-away tail to its munching jaws, which chomp on a Pinocchio-nosed George W. Bush doll, the dragon attracts all sorts of curiosity-seekers—from Communist Revolutionary youth to soot-caked anarchists who look like Dick Van Dyke's chimney-sweep kick-line from *Mary Poppins*. There are all manner of distractions, from reunions with former holding-pen mates to the pro-bono lawyer who asks, "Is this the socialist group?" ("Aren't they all?" I respond.)

But Adam, who sports a Brillo Pad of hair and Buddy Holly glasses, never loses sight of his Dragon-Master responsibilities. He lashes car batteries to the dragon's wood-rickshaw frame in tight Eagle Scout knots, in order to power the sound system. He barks orders at his affinity group, telling people they're permitted out of the dragon torso to take bathroom breaks, but they must find their own substitutes. He apologizes that the PVC pipes feeding into the dragon's nostrils will not be smoking as they have at other protests. This is, after all, Mayor Bloomberg's New York.

Walking point in front of the

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Photos: Lev Nisnevitch

The Dragon of Self-Determination being destroyed; Adam Eidinger (below)

dragon is Lizzie Croydon, one of Adam's close cohorts. Lizzie is a fledgling stand-up comic (she specializes in "world culture humor"), a 1-900 tarot-card reader, and an aikido aficionado who calls actor/martial artist Steven Seagal her "sensei." Dressed in an oriental tunic, Lizzie does shoulder rolls and spins bamboo rods, and while landing on your back on the bare concrete can be hard on a girl, she says she'd follow Adam anywhere, not only because of his commitment to nonviolence, but because she once heard him refer to their like not as "protesters" but as "attesters."

As we join the protest route up Seventh Avenue, the Dragon of Self-Determination is a camera magnet. But Adam spreads the love around. Taking the dragon's microphone, he transforms himself from a nice Jewish boy into the fourth Beastie Boy. He spins all the protest tunes from the Clash to James Brown to the Beastie's own "Finga-lickin' Good," while allowing every yobbo with a couplet and a dream to bust a rhyme on his sound system, like the skinny white kid who scream-sings: *Hey Bush / You liar / Your cowboy ass is fired!*

When Adam is not attempting guttural dragon noises that sound like a gopher with smoker's cough, he improvises his own chants, such as "*We're gonna hydrate / We're gonna liberate!*" Uninspired by his call to drink more fluids, someone hoots for a new DJ. But Adam is not discouraged. He is the CINC, the General, the Dragon Master. He not only inspires the troops, he also provides a public service with announcements like "This is the Dragon of Self-Determination; will Tiffany Price from Indiana University please come to the dragon to pick up her lost wallet?"

The caravan inches along the choked streets about as quickly as a passing kidney stone. I get out front to

see Lizzie doing her shoulder rolls/bamboo twirls, and catch a rod right in the goo-loos, so I head back to the safety of the dragon torso, where Adam is spinning any and all requests through the sound system, except when someone tells him that the anarchists would like to hear some smooth jazz.

But as we edge closer to Madison Square Garden in order to fly our middle finger at the Man, the mood blackens and everyone seems overcome with the nervous twitchiness one feels when too many high-strung people with bad intentions are operating in tight quarters. As Adam stops with the good-times tunes, and starts playing mixed-tape hardcore punk thrust at him by someone in the crowd, a menacing bloc of anarchists inch up on our left flank, holding cardboard shields shoulder-to-shoulder to make a wall, while others mask-up with bandannas and still others hold umbrellas to shield from police surveillance.

As the dragon stops in front of the Garden, Adam and his team cite technical difficulties, break down their equipment faster than a Jeff Gordon pit crew, and start walking away briskly. With a wife and a five-month-

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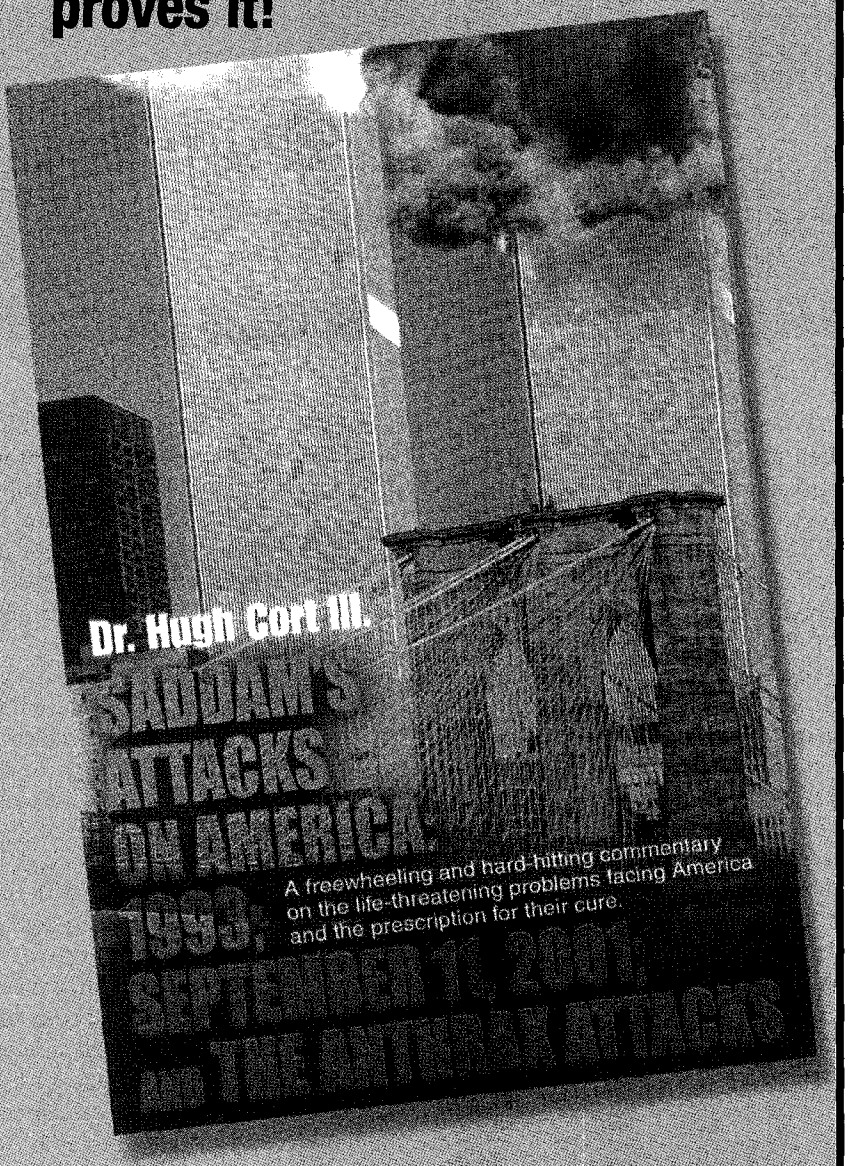

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old daughter, and a case still on appeal from the last convention, Adam says, "I can't be around for whatever happens," by way of apology. The people's dragon is about to be commandeered by the anarchists, whose idea of a cheeky slogan is "F— Your War." And Adam wants no part of it.

I take off after him, but don't want to miss the scene. When I double back, however, the dragon has already turned into cinders in what looks to be an anarchist marshmallow roast. The riot police are slow to react, but when the taunting anarchists themselves seem slow to vacate the protest route, bowed-armed bulls with Irish and Italian surnames start charging the little twits, dropping them like middle linebackers laying waste in the open field.

Arrests are made. Paddywagons are loaded. Debris is rained down on the police by onlookers. Mounted cops come in and pin us all against the parade route barriers for a cool-down period. "We better be allowed to finish our march," one pixie in a designer "Dissident" tank top says. Not without a change of shoes, one would hope. There are horse droppings everywhere.

Later on, I catch up with Adam at one of his favorite restaurants off Union Square—a place where hemp-crusted catfish is always in season—and he looks slightly bothered when I give him an after-action report. He knew the dragon wasn't coming home, but didn't know it was going to be set aflame. He winces. But street theatrics are an important component of a successful protest, he says. They help mainstreamers understand that "they can make a jailbreak from the two-party system."

"None of us are pure. We do the best we can," he says. Still, he's sticking with the movement, even if in order to do so he has to eke out a meager living doing public-relations work for progressive companies like Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps. He tells me it's all-natural, the anarchists' favorite soap.

"I didn't think anarchists cared much for soap," I say.

"They do," he says, undeterred. But "they don't wear deodorant—it has petroleum-based ingredients." ♦

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Full Court Press

Will Senate Republicans "go nuclear" over judges?

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE how the Senate could become more partisan than it is today. But that's what Democrats vow will happen if Republicans attempt a rare parliamentary maneuver to break the stalemate over President Bush's judicial nominees.

With 10 nominations now blocked by filibuster, many GOP senators say it's time to use the "nuclear option"—or, as they prefer to call it, the "constitutional option." The leading advocate of this strategy is Mississippi senator Trent Lott. He would have Republicans move before the election, ideally in September. "At least 45 of the 51 GOP senators would say, 'Let's go for it,'" Lott insists.

"It" might work something like this. Republicans would request a ruling from the Senate chair that the cloture rule—requiring 60 votes to end debate—is unconstitutional as applied to judicial confirmations. This would mean the Democratic minority could no longer prevent yea-or-nay votes on nominees they oppose. Once this ruling came down (very likely from Vice President Dick Cheney), Republicans would need a majority to uphold it, after which the Senate could move to up-or-down votes on Bush's nominees.

The principal barrier to this maneuver is Senate Rule XXII. It requires not only a three-fifths supermajority of all senators (60 votes) for cloture, but also a two-thirds supermajority of senators "present and voting" (67 votes if all are present) to change Senate rules. So a bare GOP majority couldn't possibly amend the chamber's filibuster rule. Or could it?

Back in 1975, a narrow majority of Senate Democrats did just that. They used the so-called nuclear option to lower the threshold for invoking cloture from 67 to 60 votes. "We cannot allow a minority, a small group of members, to grab the Senate by the throat and hold it there," Democratic majority leader Mike Mansfield said at the time. Senators Patrick Leahy, Ted Kennedy, and Joseph Biden—each of whom sits on the Senate Judiciary Committee today—agreed. So did West Virginia senator Robert Byrd and Hawaii senator Daniel Inouye. All five Democrats voted in favor of the change 29 years ago.

That is the only time the Senate has ever modified its rules by the nuclear route. An eclectic mix of liberal and conservative scholars have since argued that Rule XXII is unconstitutional, as it binds present and future Senates to rules enacted by a previous Senate. Douglas Kmiec, dean of the Catholic University Law School, wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* in March 2003 that Rule XXII

> violates fundamental law as old as Sir William Blackstone, who observed in the mid-18th century that "Acts of Parliament derogatory from the power of subsequent parliaments bind not." Likewise, the Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the legislature does not have the power to bind itself in the future.

Whatever its legal merits, the

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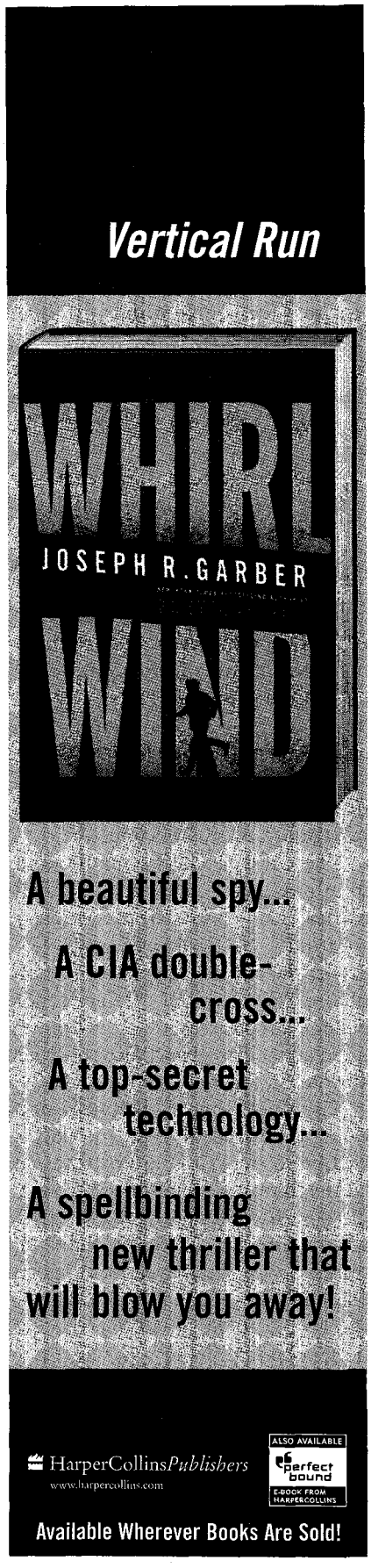

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nuclear option faces an uphill battle. Should Senate Republicans push the button, Democrats have promised to freeze all legislative activity and bring the chamber to a halt (a "nuclear winter," as it were). "That clearly is a risk for [Republicans]," says one senior Democratic aide, "if they're seen scoring political points rather than taking care of business." Todd Webster, communications director for Senate minority leader Tom Daschle, notes that even several Republicans think it's a bad idea. "There is no more powerful condemnation of the nuclear option," he says.

The Republican holdouts are mostly liberals and moderates: senators Lincoln Chafee, Susan Collins, Olympia Snowe, and possibly John McCain and Arlen Specter. But some prominent conservatives—namely Senate majority whip Mitch McConnell, John Warner, and Judiciary Committee members Jon Kyl and Charles Grassley—have also expressed reluctance to go nuclear. "Unless it [will succeed], it shouldn't be used," Sen. Grassley says. "We can't afford to lose this one."

There are 51 GOP senators; and only one Democrat, Georgia's Zell Miller, has endorsed the nuclear solution. Not surprisingly, few expect the Republicans to go nuclear before the election. "There's not enough support for it," a Republican judiciary staffer says. "You'd only get 40 votes in favor of it in the end."

The GOP's more likely preelection tactic, according to this staffer, will be to stack up cloture votes on all the filibustered nominees in a single day. Texas senator John Cornyn, who chairs the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, supports using cloture-vote stacking to "raise the visibility" of the filibusters. But he feels it should be a precursor to the nuclear option. Cornyn believes Republicans are "within 2 votes" of securing a majority for altering Senate Rule XXII. Sen. Lott agrees that they're close, perhaps within a single vote. But even he doesn't expect the Republican leadership to go nuclear on judges—if it does at all—until after the election or early 2005 (assuming Bush and a GOP Senate majority are reelected).

In the meantime, Republicans hope the filibuster issue will help President Bush—or, at the very least, GOP Senate candidates—in the November election. A senior GOP aide claims any reference to judicial gridlock is "an applause line for the president," and the Democrats "are nervous about it." He points out that Republicans Saxby Chambliss (in Georgia) and Norm Coleman (in Minnesota) got traction in their successful 2002 Senate campaigns from ads criticizing Democratic obstructionism on judges.

It's true, Republicans dragged their feet on many Clinton nominees. But what's unprecedented about Democratic tactics is the use of filibusters to block judicial nominees who would otherwise be confirmed by a floor vote.

Pennsylvania Republican Rick Santorum says the issue appeals strongly to conservative voters. "It's probably more important for Senate candidates than it is for the president," he explains, particularly given the debate over judicially imposed same-sex marriage. Sean Rushton, executive director of the conservative Committee for Justice, thinks the federal judiciary will be a "high-visibility issue in key battleground states" such as Colorado, Missouri, Ohio, and Florida. "I think *all* the [GOP Senate candidates] will use it," a Republican judiciary staffer says, "especially those in the South."

To Democratic ears, such talk is proof of conservative extremism. A senior Democratic aide contends the GOP judicial strategy has been to target "the right wing of the Republican base." This aide also insists that "Democrats have been far more cooperative with President Bush [on judges] than Republicans were with President Clinton."

That isn't quite right. It's true, Republicans did drag their feet on many Clinton nominees, particularly in his second term. And, in a few cases, they even tried to filibuster. But what's unprecedented about current Democratic tactics is the use of filibusters to block judicial nominees *who would otherwise be confirmed by a floor vote*. As Todd Gaziano has written in the *National Law Journal*, "neither party has ever used a filibuster to permanently block a confirmation vote of someone with majority Senate support."

Of the 34 circuit court judges President Bush has nominated since the 108th Congress began, 10 have been filibustered (including Miguel Estrada, who withdrew his name from consideration in September 2003). Republicans tried to call attention to the filibusters with their 40-hour marathon debate last November. At that time, GOP senators were lobbying for a solution offered by Senate majority leader Bill Frist and Zell Miller. Under their plan, the number of votes needed to break a judicial filibuster through cloture would have declined with each attempted cloture vote from 60 to 57 to 54 to 51—and finally to a simple majority of those present and voting. But the Frist-Miller proposal failed.

Some conservatives regret that procedural rows have so dominated the Senate debate over Bush's nominees. Underlying the filibuster spat, they say, is the real *casus belli* of the confirmation wars: a sharp disagreement between the parties over judicial imperialism and how the courts should rule on touchstone issues. As one GOP judiciary staffer puts it, "We've lost focus on what we should be talking about, which [are] the principled, core beliefs of the Republican party." ♦

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Bush's Greatness

There's a good reason he infuriates the reactionary left

By David Gelernter

It's obvious not only that George W. Bush has already earned his Great President badge (which might even outrank the Silver Star) but that much of the opposition to Bush has a remarkable and very special quality; one might be tempted to call it "lunacy." But that's too easy. The "special quality" of anti-Bush opposition tells a more significant, stranger story than that.

Bush's greatness is often misunderstood. He is great not because he showed America how to react to 9/11 but because he showed us how to deal with a still bigger event—the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 left us facing two related problems, one moral and one practical. Neither President Clinton nor the first Bush found solutions—but it's not surprising that the right answers took time to discover, and an event like 9/11 to bring them into focus.

In moral terms: If you are the biggest boy on the playground and there are no adults around, the playground is your responsibility. It is your duty to prevent outrages—because your moral code demands that outrages be prevented, and (for now) you are the only one who can prevent them.

If you are one of the *two* biggest boys, and the other one orders you not to protect the weak lest he bash you and everyone else he can grab—then your position is more complicated. Your duty depends on the nature of the outrage that ought to be stopped, and on other circumstances. This was America's position during the Cold War: Our moral obligation to overthrow tyrants was limited by the Soviet threat of hot war, maybe nuclear war.

But things are different today. We are the one and only biggest boy. We can run from our moral duty but we can't hide. If there is to be justice in the world, we must create it. No one else will act if the biggest boy won't. Some of us turn to the United Nations the way we wish we could turn to our parents. It's not easy to say, "The responsibility is mine and I must wield it." But that's what the United States has to say. No U.N. agency or fairy godmother will bail us out.

Of course our moral duty remains complicated. We must pursue justice, help the suffering, and overthrow tyrants. But there are limits to our power. We must pick our tyrants carefully, keeping in mind not only justice but our practical interests and the worldwide consequences of what we intend. Our duty in this area is like our obligation to show charity. We have no power to help everyone and no *right* to help no one. In the event, we chose to act in Afghanistan and Iraq to begin with—good choices from many viewpoints.

The end of the Cold War means that our practical duties have changed too, in a limited way. Since the close of World War I in 1918, our main enemy has been the terrorist-totalitarian axis—still true today. Different nations and organizations have occupied this axis of evil, but the role itself has been remarkably stable. Until the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union was the main terrorist-totalitarian power (except when it was eclipsed by Nazi Germany and Warlord Japan). The Berlin Wall fell in 1989; in 1990, Saddam marched into Kuwait. Radical Arab terrorism and totalitarianism go way back; the Nazis and then the Soviets supported them. When the Soviets fell, Arab tyrants and terrorists were ready for the limelight. *Our* job was to find new ways to do what we had always done—fight and (ultimately) beat our terrorist and totalitarian enemies.

President Bush had to respond to these post-Cold War realities; 9/11 meant that our pondering period was over. He announced, with deeds and not just words, that we *would* meet our moral obligations, police the playground, and overthrow tyrants; we *would* meet our practical obligations and continue to lead the fight against this new version of the terrorist-totalitarian axis.

We have often been told that we face, today, a whole new kind of war. Only partly true. For more than half a century we have battled totalitarian regimes (the Soviets, North Vietnam, Cuba . . .) *and* the terrorists they sponsored. Today we are battling totalitarian regimes (Baathist Iraq and the Taliban's Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea)

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and the terrorists they sponsor. What's changed? Since we became modern history's first monopower, our obligations and maneuvering room are both greater. But the basic nature of the struggle is the same.

Lincoln said, "Let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it." Bush answered: "Okay; let's roll." *We accept our obligation to be the world's policeman*. If not us, who? If not now, when?

The war in Iraq is dual-purpose, like most American wars. Take the Civil War. At the beginning, the North fought mainly for pragmatic reasons. No nation can tolerate treason, or allow itself to be ripped to bits or auctioned off piece-wise by malcontents. Midwesterners couldn't allow the Mississippi to fall into foreign hands; they needed their outlet to the sea. And so on. Slavery was overshadowed. But as the war continued, slavery emerged as *the* issue, and the war's character changed.

The Iraq war started as a fight to knock out a regime that invaded its neighbors, murdered its domestic enemies with poison gas, subsidized terrorism, and flouted the international community. Obviously such a regime was dangerous to American interests. But as the war continued and we confronted Saddam's gruesome tyranny face to face, the moral issue grew more important, as emancipation did in the Civil War. For years the Iraqi people had been screaming, in effect: "Oh, my God. Please help me! Please help me! I'm dying!" How could America have answered, "We don't want to get involved"? We are the biggest kid on the playground. If we won't help, who will?

I have just quoted the death-cries of Kitty Genovese, who died on the streets of New York 40 years ago. And I have quoted the response of an onlooker who didn't feel like helping. Her case still resonates in America's conscience, and tells us more than we want to know about the president's enemies.

The *New York Times* ran the story in March 1964.

> For more than half an hour 38 respectable, law-abiding citizens in Queens watched a killer stalk and stab a woman in three separate attacks in Kew Gardens.
>
> Twice the sound of their voices and the sudden glow of their bedroom lights interrupted him and frightened him off. Each time he returned, sought her out and stabbed her again. Not one person telephoned the police during the assault; one witness called after the woman was dead.

The left wanted America to watch Saddam stab Iraq to death and do nothing. That is the left's concept of moral responsibility in the post-Cold War world.

> Miss Genovese screamed: "Oh, my God, he stabbed me! Please help me! Please help me!"

The Iraqi people were dying. The left had no pity. The Bush-haters were opposed to American "arrogance." The *New York Times* shrugged.

> It was 3:50 by the time the police received their first call, from a man who was a neighbor of Miss Genovese. In two minutes they were at the scene. . . .
>
> The man explained that he had called the police after much deliberation. He had phoned a friend in Nassau County for advice. . . .
>
> "I didn't want to get involved," he sheepishly told the police.

Let's not get involved, said the Bush-haters. It's none of our business. Let the U.N. do it.

> One couple, now willing to talk about that night, said they heard the first screams. The husband looked thoughtfully at the bookstore where the killer first grabbed Miss Genovese.
>
> "We went to the window to see what was happening," he said, "but the light from our bedroom made it difficult to see the street." The wife, still apprehensive, added: "I put out the light and we were able to see better."
>
> Asked why they hadn't called the police, she shrugged and replied, "I don't know."

We have paid a steep price in Iraq, a thousand dead; but if you choose duty, you must choose to pay. Speaking for America, the president has said: *We choose duty*. What do we get in return? Nothing. Except the privilege of looking at ourselves in the mirror, and facing history and our children.

Opposition to Bush's policy in Iraq goes even further than the Kitty Genovese defense. Its real nature finally came clear when I heard about an anti-Bush harangue by a survivor of Hitler's Germany. He was a young boy when he and his family got out, just in time. "I hate Bush," this man said—or words to that effect—"because America today reminds me of Germany then. Bush is on his way to creating a fascist America." Other Bush-haters have said similar things.

Notice (it is a thing we will have to explain) that this man hates Bush not because of but despite the facts. Has the Republican Congress decreed a U.S. version of the Nuremberg race laws? Has the administration transformed every American news source into a propaganda machine? Demanded that Jews (or anyone) be fired? That Jewish (or any other kind of) shops, businesses, professionals be boycotted? Propaganda posters everywhere? Students thrown out of schools? Secret police grabbing people off the streets? Children urged to inform on parents? All opposition parties banned? Churches harassed? A "Bush Youth" that every "Aryan"

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boy must join? Storm-troopers holding torchlight parades, singing hate-mongering war songs? Gigantic communal fines levied against Jews (or anyone else)? State-sponsored pogroms? Massive regimentation and rearmament? A führer cult and special schools to train disciples? Brutal suppression of all regime opponents? *No?* Actually America under Bush resembles Nazi Germany *in no way whatsoever*, isn't that so? Then why did you lie and say it did?

One hears many similar accusations nowadays. The Bush administration is spending blood for oil, hopes to expand its imperialist reach, intends to dominate and oppress the Iraqi people, is the world's leading threat to peace. Hates Muslims, despises our allies, plans to suppress the Bill of Rights. There is a name for this kind of hatred—the kind that shrugs off reality, loves to mock its targets and treat them as barely human, capable of any outrage, unspeakably stupid and evil. There is a name for the kind of hatred that applies automatically to any member of a designated group—in this case to *American conservatives* and especially *white, religious American conservatives.* The name of this hatred is *racism*.

We can't understand hatred like the German survivor's or Michael Moore's or a million self-righteous left-wingers' unless we understand that their Bush-hatred is *racist* hatred.

"Race" has traditionally meant any group that *seems* like a group, with a recognizable group identity—Americans, British, Jews, Japanese were all called "races." The Oxford English Dictionary says that a "race" is (among other things) "a group or class of persons . . . having some common feature or features." Thus "the race of good men" (1580), "a race of idle people" (1611), "a new race of poets" (1875). The newspaper humorist Don Marquis once wrote about "the royal race of hicks." Racist hatred has clearly recognizable characteristics:

¶ *The hater knows all about his target automatically; no research required.* Recall how many leftists were shocked when Bob Woodward informed them, in his Bush book, that the president was an alert, hands-on manager. They had known this to be false *a priori*.

¶ *The hater harbors a stupendous conceit.* Not long ago an Ivy League philosophy professor explained the political homogeneity of so many philosophy departments. Pure merit, he said; you have to be *smart* to be a philosophy professor, and conservatives are *dumb*, so what can you expect?

¶ *The hater is moved by a terrible, frantic eagerness to set himself apart from "them."* In the spring of 2003, an American pop-singer announced to her London audience, "Just so you know, we're ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas."

¶ *The hater just* knows *that his opponent acts not on principle but out of greed or stupidity.* At an anti-Iraq war demonstration in March 2004, the actor Woody Harrelson read a poem. "I recognize your face, I recognize your name. / Your daddy killed for oil, and you did the same." We often hear this "blood for oil" accusation. After the first Gulf War we had Iraqi and Kuwaiti oilfields in our grasp. If our goal was to steal oil, why did we give them back? Are we *that* stupid?

¶ *The hater has no shame—because he knows (not by reason but automatically) that he is right.* Thus a decent and likable retired businessman, rich and with every reason to be grateful to America—the survivor of Nazi Germany I've mentioned—accuses the president of closet fascism.

That's racist hatred.

I don't say that all Bush-haters are racist. By no means. We have a long tradition of super-heated politics in this country. Everyone is entitled to hate the president and do his best to get rid of him.

The racist attacks I have in mind come from the reactionary left—not from the average registered Democrat, in other words, but from the liberal elite.

Reactionaries recoil from new ideas and try to suppress and defeat them. They want things to stay the same. Hence their racist hatred of uppity white conservatives, who have developed the cheek to threaten the left's cultural power. Such institutions as Fox News and the conservative Washington think tanks are hugely disturbing to reactionary liberals. The president faces the same thinking as he tries to set policy for post-Cold War America. Reactionary liberals want everything to stay *just the same*. All trends must continue *just as they have been*. (Judges must continue to subvert democracy; Congress must continue to create new entitlements.) We must treat the new totalitarians *just the same* as we once were *forced* to treat the Soviets—gingerly. Our goal must be not to liberate their victims, not to defeat and disarm their military machines, but to arrange détente with their dictators—just as we once did. (Détente with Saddam was French and Russian policy until we screwed things up.) Our antiquated pre-cell phone, pre-microchip laws and regulations must stay *just the same* (kill the Patriot Act!), and we must sit still and wait politely for the next terrorist outrage, just as we always have.

Bush has a simple message for the reactionary left: The times change and we change with them. He is a progressive conservative—and a progressive president in the best sense. And he has established his greatness in record time. ♦

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I Can't Believe I Watched the Whole Thing

Gavel-to-gavel with C-SPAN

By Andrew Ferguson

According to a monograph I read a while back, called "The Rise and Fall of the Televised Political Convention," television networks used to cover political conventions for 10 hours a day, sometimes more. Then they gave up, and you can't really blame them. The all-news cable channels, it was assumed, would pick up the slack, broadcasting the conventions gavel to gavel; after all, what else was there for them to do? That didn't work out either. The all-news cable channels have pretty much abandoned the idea of broadcasting news, preferring instead to broadcast their own commentators as they interview one another about what they think about the news, and this tendency intensifies, paradoxically enough, during those lively periods when there's presumably a lot of news to broadcast, as with the conventions.

And so the task of broadcasting political conventions from the first blow of the gavel to the last has fallen to C-SPAN, which alone treats them as events worthy of a citizen's attention. You can debate the premise but you can't argue with the result. The result is full of wonders. Last month I tried watching the Democratic convention on C-SPAN, off and on, and it offered a much more rewarding experience than watching the all-news cable channels. You never have to look at Chris Matthews, for one thing, or Keith Olbermann, for that matter, or Bill O'Reilly, come to think of it, or Sean Hannity, or Paul Begala . . . honest, I could go on and on. I did miss that nice Alan Colmes, though.

I stuck to C-SPAN last week, starting Monday night, and unlike those unlucky people who tuned in to FNC or CNN or MSNBC in hopes of watching the convention, I actually got to watch the convention.

Monday 7:30: Except I was late. By the time I settled before the TV with the instruments of my craft—notebook, two pens (one red, one blue), malt liquor—the evening session was well underway, and here I am watching my first speech, given by Dennis Hastert, the Speaker of the House and the second- or third-most powerful man in government. He displays the same personal magnetism that has made his name familiar to fully 13 percent of the American people. He says he wants to describe "the right vision for America. It is the Lincoln vision, it is the Reagan vision, and it is the American vision," but—wouldn't you know it—he's squinting. Hastert is a very big Speaker, and though I don't know him personally this is obviously a fellow who is refusing to level with himself when he stands at the rack at Today's Man. From the beltline upwards it looks as though he's stuffed his coat with Beanie Babies. He looks like a shoplifter at a novelty shop.

Suddenly he stops speaking and turns from the podium. The speech is over. No one seems to notice.

Then, for the longest time, nothing happens. If you've ever attended a pro basketball game you'll know the feeling: Play suddenly stops, though there's no penalty or injury on the court, and everybody just stands around for two or three minutes. It's a "broadcast time out," required not by the pace or rules of the game but by the demands of commercial TV. Then, just as mysteriously, the game resumes.

Something similar happens several times an hour during the C-SPAN coverage. I don't know why. Commentators always say conventions are "tightly scripted," but on C-SPAN they seem pretty baggily scripted. When the networks tune in, the schedules tighten up, I'm sure. Otherwise, in the early hours of the evening, there are endless longueurs. People mill about or doze in their seats. A band opposite the stage plays disco music, inexplicably and not well. The C-SPAN cameras scan the delegates, pausing on those unfortunate Republicans who have chosen to do the Hustle. I doodle in my notebook.

I'm glad not to be watching the cable channels during such doldrums. Otherwise I would have to listen to commentary. Today the commentators are chewing over the

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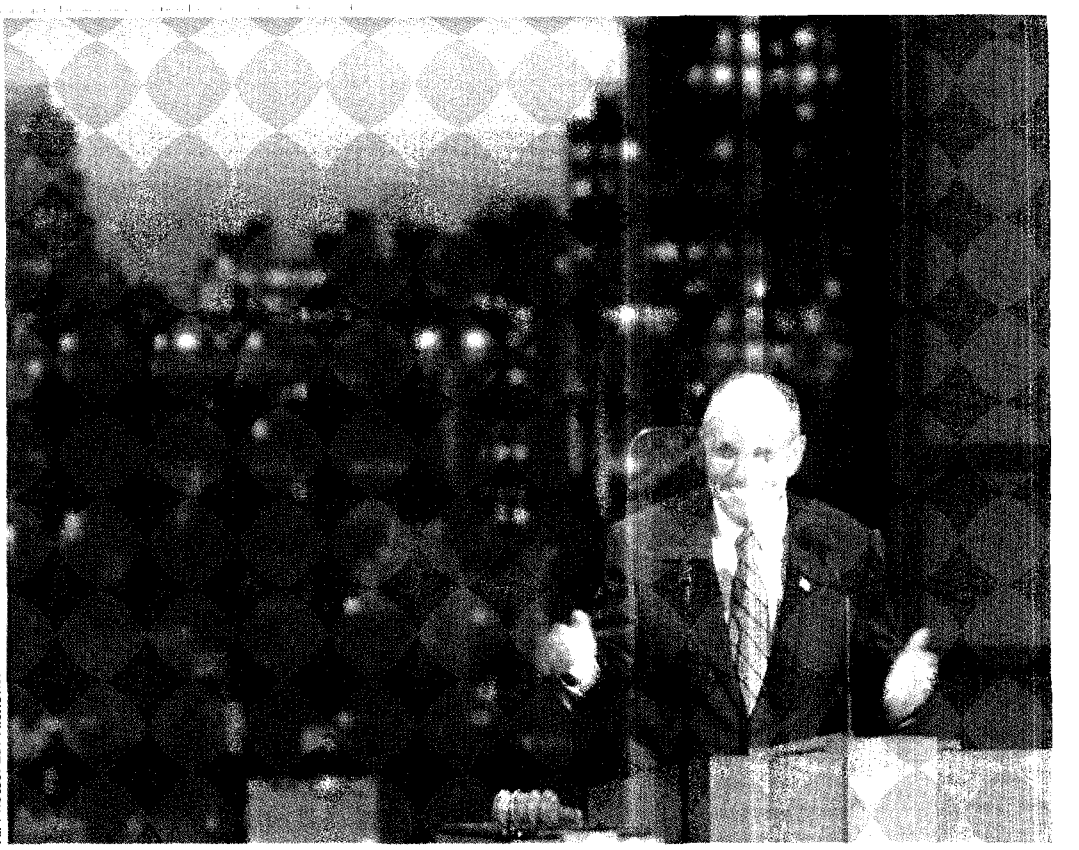
most recent curious remark from President Bush, uncorked just this morning. The war against terror, he told the *Today* show, is not something we can "win." Good thing they don't let the president write his own speeches: "We will not tire, we will not waver, we will not falter, and we will not win!"

7:45: Dick Cheney arrives to take his seat in Madison Square Garden, wife and extremely cute grandchildren in tow. As he moves down the aisles toward his box, men extend their arms toward him and lower their heads and round their shoulders, as they always will when placed in the presence of the Alpha male. And Cheney's just the Beta male. When Bush shows up Thursday night these guys may melt into the floor.



All Photos: Lev Nisnevitch

8:00: The screen fills with a video honoring Gerald Ford. At 91, Ford is the grand old man of the Republican party and, as one of the most modest and decent men ever to assume the presidency, deserving of universal respect. The tribute lasts 90 seconds—roughly half as long as his term in office.

8:30: For reasons that aren't clear, the lights have dimmed and a band called Dexter Freebish is playing. I am told, by people who have cultivated a taste in contemporary rock-hiphop-garage-ska-jangle-gothic-industrial-surf-progressive-electroclash pop music, that this band is terrible, a wash-out—which makes their appearance here yet another failed attempt by clueless Republicans to look hip, in the time-honored tradition. I wouldn't know myself. The band sounds indistinguishable from a dozen others I've seen heaped with praise over the last 10 years and, paralyzed by fuddy-duddyism, I refuse to pretend I can any longer tell why one new band is supposed to be better than another. I have come to feel the way my father must have felt in 1965, when he couldn't tell the difference between the Beatles, who were brilliant, and the Dave Clark Five, who weren't, on the grounds that they all played electric guitars, wore pointy boots, and needed haircuts.

Watching the members of Dexter Freebish strutting and windmilling on the cluttered stage, however, I did get nostalgic for the days when the Republican clumsiness in matters of pop culture was much more transparent and unambiguous. Used to be, when professional Republicans wanted to appeal to "the kids," Herb Klein or some old Nixon hand would call up a Broadway producer friend, who'd hire the Cowsills or Debby Boone or Up with People, and these "youth acts" would gleam and grin their way across the stage while the kids in the audience listened politely and Herb and the other oldsters looked on approvingly, perhaps even snapping a finger now and then and remarking to one another that, hey, this rock music isn't all that bad, is it? The cluelessness was kind of pathetic, but there was a dignity to it—or rather, it presumed a kind of dignity on the part of the oldsters who were trying to pander but weren't quite pulling it off. It presumed that there was some separate "youth culture" that the adults didn't belong to and didn't really want to belong to, having better things to do. Now, of course, the youth culture is the culture.

9:20: The actor Ron Silver performs a speech in support of President Bush. Silver is an excellent actor, and the speech is sharp as a Ginsu knife, but Silver is, as he modestly calls himself, "a well-recognized liberal," and there are moments when he betrays an unmistakable uneasiness with the company his hawkish principles have now forced him to keep. Halfway through the speech Silver suddenly yells, "The president is doing exactly the right thing," and the crowd takes up the chant "Four More Years!" Silver seems briefly thrown. He's old enough to remember the early '70s, when this same chant was most famously deployed for the reelection of, gulp, Richard Nixon. Silver looks out wonderingly, and his eyes widen at the thought: "Oh my God: I'm surrounded by Republicans." And then the realization: "Oh my God: I'm one of them!"

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He is, too. He'll get used to it.

9:30: More disco. Lots of disco. Even the C-SPAN cameramen are bored. We're only a few hours into the convention and already they've run out of pretty girls and guys in weird hats to zoom in on. I break my own rule and switch to other channels. Larry King is interviewing Andy Card.

"Andy, people say this is the most mean-spirited campaign in memory . . . "

"Actually Larry, I think in terms of mean-spirited the worst were in the late 1800s."

"That's right," says Larry. "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too."

On the *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, two of the political analysts are . . . *disagreeing*. Is that allowed? One of them says that "John McCain cultivates the media." The other responds, "I don't think John McCain cultivates the media."

Truly, America is a divided nation.

10:15: John McCain's closest adviser, a man named Mark Salter, is coincidentally the best speechwriter in the country, so it's no surprise that McCain's speech is beautifully written, a subtle blend of argument and exhortation. "What our enemies have sought to destroy is beyond their reach. It cannot be taken from us. It can only be surrendered."

But McCain is followed by Rudy Giuliani, and though Giuliani's themes are the same as McCain's his speech doesn't seem written at all, but improvised, a randomly integrated collection of rhetorical modules. This isn't a surprise, either. Since leaving the mayor's office, Giuliani has become a motivational speaker and itinerant celebrity-for-hire. He can make as much as $100,000 for a one-hour speech—which comes to about $20 per spoken word, if I reckon right.

He was giving this speech for free, of course, and he was intending to be generous, lavish even, for he spoke far beyond his allotted time. By the time he finished, its market value was easily $150,000. Boiled down to half its weight it could have been a good speech. There were no interesting or arresting turns of phrase, but many anecdotes, told anecdotally and starring the mayor himself, who was obviously enjoying himself. What self-regard the man has, what a titanic presumption of his own charm! It was difficult to gauge the crowd reaction through C-SPAN, but seeing him deliver the speech on screen—15, 20, 25 minutes—was like watching a solo love-in. In one of the speech's many climaxes, he imitated a construction worker giving a bear hug to President Bush. Giuliani wrapped his arms around himself. He swayed to and fro. And he held on just a moment or two too long. I started to think that maybe everybody should just tip-toe out of the convention hall and leave the former mayor alone with the man he loves.

All the New York Republicans I know promise they will vote for Giuliani when he runs for president in four years. Their reasoning seems to be that Giuliani deserves the presidency because, as mayor, he cleaned up their neighborhoods, replanted Central Park, and made it safe to walk to their favorite restaurants—a suitably provincial rationale for the residents of the most provincial city in the world, in service of its most self-indulgent celebrity.

In Arlington County, Virginia, where I live, we have a fantastic county manager. Maybe she could be vice president.

TUESDAY 7:25: The Republican convention is in session for four hours each night, but it's increasingly clear that the Republicans do not have four hours of speakers worth listening to each night. Hence the disco music. Hence the longueurs. Hence this: Every 15 minutes or so, the big screen at the podium suddenly fills with the face of a woman pretending to be a TV news reporter conducting an interview. There are several of these women, all of them apparently employed by the Republican National Committee. They are identified as "convention jockeys," which is a nice way of saying they are aspiring TV news Twinkies—Deborah Norvilles-in-training. The Republican party is a party of dreamers.

But their effect is disorienting. The offstage emcee will suddenly announce: "Let's go to [Twinkie name] in the [some state] delegation." And then the Twinkie, following a script, pretends to interview a delegate. The questions I've heard so far are: "How does it feel to be in New York City?" "Are you looking forward to Governor Schwarzenegger's speech tonight?" and "Tell us about your favorite experience at the convention."

Forty years ago, the historian Daniel Boorstin coined the term "pseudo-event" to describe what was then a relatively new social phenomenon: happenings that had no intrinsic significance but were staged for the sole purpose of generating news coverage—press conferences, for example, or awards ceremonies. Political conventions degenerated into pseudo-events a generation ago. But a pseudo-event requires news coverage, and as the news coverage has dried up, convention planners have had to invent their own pseudo-coverage, such as these make-believe interviews. The modern pseudo-event now mimics the press coverage of a pseudo-event. The Republican convention, in other words, is a pseudo-pseudo-event.

It's enough to make your head hurt. I'm wondering if there's any more Colt 45 in the fridge.

8:10: In a lovely coincidence, just as this pseudo-revelation dawns on me, Elizabeth Dole takes the stage. She is, as always, wreathed in smiles. She says: "Folks, this

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time I promise to stay behind the podium," and dismal memories come flooding back. Mrs. Dole is referring to her landmark speech at the 1996 convention in San Diego that nominated her husband, Bob Dole, for president. Last month, in Boston, some commentators criticized Teresa Heinz's speech for her husband John Kerry as unprecedented and self-indulgent. They had forgotten Mrs. Dole's 1996 performance, and they're lucky. Back then, in extolling her husband's virtues, Mrs. Dole picked her way down the stage steps in her high heels and wandered the audience with a portable microphone, a slightly less scary incarnation of Sally Jessy Raphael. She told homey stories and little jokes, dispensed bits of kitchen-table wisdom and extended her healing hands to the delegates who surrounded her.

It seemed possible then, and it is undeniable now, that Mrs. Dole, by importing the cheesy protocols of daytime talk shows into the ancient customs of a political convention, had breached a line of formality and personal reticence that would never be restored. The Republicans who indulged her then still bore the scars of the 1992 convention, which the press had denounced as "harsh" and "extreme." In San Diego they resolved never to make the same mistake again. They cheered her wildly. And in New York they still follow the example she set. With the exception of the marquee speeches, from McCain and Giuliani last night and from Arnold Schwarzenegger tonight, the convention has so far been a series of soft-focus videos, followed by a parade of the lame and the halt, the luckless and distressed, telling tales of personal uplift that are somehow traced to the policies of the Bush administration. These are Mrs. Dole's children.

So tonight, in the heart of her speech, she quotes her spiritual offspring: "As the president said, 'If you want to help in the war on terror, love your neighbor.' Love your neighbor!"

8:20: One of the Twinkies says that President Bush has increased aid for adoption, and homeownership is at an all-time high, apparently, thanks to special homeownership grants.

8:25: A man named John Quinones says that "as a Hispanic and as an American, I believe in less taxes and less government," and then introduces the president's nephew, George P. Bush, who boasts that President Bush "proposed the largest education funding increase in history." Suddenly he starts speaking Spanish.

8:45: C-SPAN shows one of the convention Twinkies interviewing a delegate: "How does the first lady inspire others?" she asks.

9:10: Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, vibrating like he's spent the afternoon doing espresso shooters at Starbucks, is holding up the Drug Discount Card that President Bush has bestowed on America's seniors. "You can get your card today," he says. "It's simple. Just call 1-800-MEDICARE and tell them you want your card. Tell them Dr. Frist prescribed it."

My young daughter, who I will quote just this once, looks up at the screen. "Why do they have commercials in the middle of their convention?"

9:20: A TV star named Elizabeth Hasselbeck says President Bush has increased funding for breast cancer screening by 20 percent. Her mother had breast cancer, it turns out, though it's not clear whether the increased funding is a direct consequence of that. Breast cancer is "our nation's issue."

9:29: Rod Paige, the education secretary, says President Bush in three years has increased funding for disadvantaged students more than President Clinton did in eight. Pell Grants, too. Also pre-K and Head Start.

9:40: Republicans are the party of limited government, says Michael Steele, the lieutenant governor of Maryland. And "President Bush didn't just hope for increased homeownership in America, he put his hope into action."

10:15: In a stirring speech, Arnold Schwarzenegger describes how he became a Republican watching the Nixon-Humphrey race in 1968. He manages to deliver a sentence that has never been uttered before in human history: "Listening to Nixon speak sounded more like a breath of fresh air."

And the crowd roars when he says, "If you believe your family knows how to spend your money better than the government does, then you are a Republican." Too true—unless, as I've learned tonight, the government is spending money on adoption, home mortgages, job training, mam-

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mograms, kindergarten, prescription drugs, secondary schools, college tuition, and graduate schools. Other than that, the money is yours to use as you see fit.

WEDNESDAY 7:58: The loveliest moments with C-SPAN are those one savors before the convention begins. The unblinking cameras linger on cityscapes. There's no chatter. The ambient sounds are muted. Crowds drift along the streets at dusk, as their identification badges dangle and sway and catch the light from plated storefronts. Through security checkpoints, manned by huddled cops, buses quietly roll. I sit happily with pad and pen before the TV screen. And to think that millions of my fellow Americans are wasting these precious minutes listening to Bill O'Reilly shout at some Democratic wussy.

8:10: One of the Twinkies has a young fellow from Arizona in her grip. He's the youngest delegate at the convention, apparently, and wise for his years. He addresses his comments to his fellow young persons: "If you don't vote," he says, "you can't complain." Has anyone ever formulated a better reason to depress voter turnout?

8:13: Brian Sandoval, the attorney general of Nevada, takes the podium to announce that his wife just had a baby. The convention is a little like Woodstock in that way.

8:20: Somewhere backstage, lurking in the wings, is a high school drama coach who, for the good of the party, should be killed. He, or she, has evidently been tutoring the convention speakers in hand gestures, and the effect is disastrous. Last night, Dr. Frist, talking about Medicare, looked as though he was shadow boxing with a giant, invisible bear. And now here's Sen. Rick Santorum, running the full hand-movement repertoire of Bill Clinton, the greatest gesturer in American politics.

Clinton was so good at speaking with his hands, in fact, that no one else should try. Santorum does the Clinton Thumb Thrust adequately, but it is badly timed. He fails utterly at the famed Clinton Cross-stitch, in which the tip of the index finger touches the tip of the thumb in imitation of threading a needle, and his Clinton Medicine-Ball Catch—two cupped hands held parallel and moved forward and back, as though receiving a toss to the midriff—is nothing short of a catastrophe. To these he adds his own Santorum Wince, in a semaphore of anguished sincerity, and the generic More-in-Sorrow Head Shake. I haven't heard a word he's said.

8:25: Clinton's everywhere tonight—his shadow, I mean, his enduring influence in the dark arts of political show biz. Towards the end of his presidency Clinton turned the White House over to a few filmmakers from *Saturday Night Live*, who videotaped a jokey skit starring the president and his wife. It wasn't the most undignified thing Clinton ever did in the White House—what would that be, do you suppose?—but it came in second, and Republicans were suitably appalled.

And now President Bush's men have done the same, and the convention sits quietly watching a jokey video filmed at the White House and starring Andy Card, Karl Rove, Scott McClellan, and the dog Barney. No one but the viewers of C-SPAN, and delegates in the Garden, get to see it, however, so President Bush still has a chance to win reelection.

8:27: Thanks to the drama coach, Senator Mitch McConnell, introducing his wife, the Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, looks like he's beset by a swarm of bees. Among many other tricky moves he makes a try for the Clinton Catch a Falling Star—fingers curled, right arm stretched skyward. A disaster.

8:30: Secretary Chao is worse. She tells a personal story about her immigrant forerunners, but it is drowned out by the cacophony of her moving arms. I imagine the two of them, the senator and the secretary, trying to spend a quiet evening at home, accidentally knocking over lamps and breaking windows as they discuss what to have for dinner.

The absurdity is a problem inextricably bound up with the rise of informal, supposedly personal speechmaking—the kind that conventions now specialize in. A speaker deploying more traditional, more elevated rhetoric may look ill at ease but never absurd, since the content of the speech doesn't force him to assume a phony informality. Chummy speechmaking, by contrast, practically requires the speaker to attempt gestures as relaxed and informal as the sentiments being expressed. But the speaker is never relaxed, not really. So the hands come into play. And he looks silly.

Secretary Chao talks policy, too. Homeownership in this country is at an all-time high.

9:11: Here's an RNC video about the American Dream Downpayment Initiative, which has pushed the rate of homeownership to record highs.

10:00: I think someone finally killed the drama coach, and I think it was Zell Miller. Introduced to the crowd, he emerges from the wings and marches to the podium. He stops. He stands straight as an I-beam. His arms are frozen at his sides. None of this waving around for him. He looks like a man who just killed somebody: beetled brow, ferocious eyes, yes, he knows it was wrong and he shouldna done it but by God I done it and I ain't ashamed.

Two minutes into his speech it's clear he will be the star of the convention, for good or ill. I expected as much and so this afternoon Nexised up a copy of his previous keynote speech, at the Democratic convention in 1992, when Miller's avowed enemies were George H.W. Bush and the equally dangerous Dan Quayle.

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"I know what Dan Quayle means when he says it's best for children to have two parents," Miller thundered. "You bet it is! And it would be nice for them to have trust funds, too. We can't all be born rich and handsome and lucky!"

The speech in '92 was a roiling stew of resentments.

"George Bush doesn't get it? Americans cannot understand why the rich can buy the best health care in the world, but all the rest of us get is rising costs and cuts in health coverage, or no health insurance at all. . . .

"Four years ago, Mr. Bush told us he was a quiet man, who hears the voices of quiet people. Today, we know the truth: George Bush is a timid man who hears only the voices of caution and the status quo. Let's face facts: George Bush just doesn't get it.

"He doesn't see it; he doesn't feel it, and he's done nothing about it. . . . If the 'law and order president' gets another term the criminals will run wild, because our commander in chief talks like Dirty Harry, but acts like Barney Fife."

I kept hoping the C-SPAN cameras would show Barney Fife himself, the 41st president, sitting there with the rest of Barney Fife II's family in a guest box at the Garden, but if they did I missed it. A good and faithful partisan, and a superior man, the elder Bush was probably smiling at the sight of Miller, a less faithful partisan, wheeling his guns around to blast the Democrats he had so delighted in 1992.

10:20: Better than Miller, Vice President Cheney shows how effective a speaker can be when he keeps the hand gestures to a minimum. His technique is impressive—Reaganesque, even: a modulated voice, a subtly expressive face, and sufficient confidence in his text to allow words to convey his meaning.

"Mortgage rates are low," he said calmly, in rock-steady tones, "and homeownership in this country at an all-time high."

THURSDAY 8:30: The music is getting better—the hired band has worked backward from disco to Motown, offering a version of "Knock on Wood" and then, careening further back, a Glenn Miller swing number.

But it is clear that the business of the convention is done, and all await the finale of Bush's speech. There's a strange plug for physical fitness, and several more gauzy videos. "I'm optimistic about America," President Bush says in one, "because I believe in what America stands for." In another, he delivers the good news about homeownership rates.

8:45: A highlight of the Democratic convention last month was the Parade of Generals and Admirals. Every Democrat with a military rank got to march across the stage in Boston to the thump of martial music. The Republicans do even better, producing not only a host of brass but also P.X. Kelly and Tommy Franks, who points out that the Bush administration, in four years, has increased funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs more than the Clinton administration did in eight. Those Democrats are so stingy!

9:15: Mel Martinez, Republican candidate for the Senate from Florida, is added to the schedule at the last minute. We C-SPAN viewers, if no one else, will know why. "As President Bush's secretary of housing," he said, "we worked together to implement a homeownership initiative that is seeing real results. Today, the homeownership rate in the United States is at an all-time high."

9:45: Someone resuscitated the drama coach. With his flapping arms, George Pataki looks as though the right wind might carry him up to the rafters, there to float among his fellow balloons. Instead he extols the president's many virtues: "When he said he was going to do something, he meant it," Pataki said. Such as? "He said he'd help small businesses, protect Social Security, and expand homeownership. He said he'd do it. And he did."

10:10: By the time Pataki is through, I've started flipping channels. All the networks and all the cable news channels have caught up with C-SPAN and are ready at last to air the president's acceptance speech as conventions should be aired, unexpurgated, without editorial comment—the C-SPAN way.

It was a good speech, too, of course. And he did not fail to mention homeownership rates. ♦

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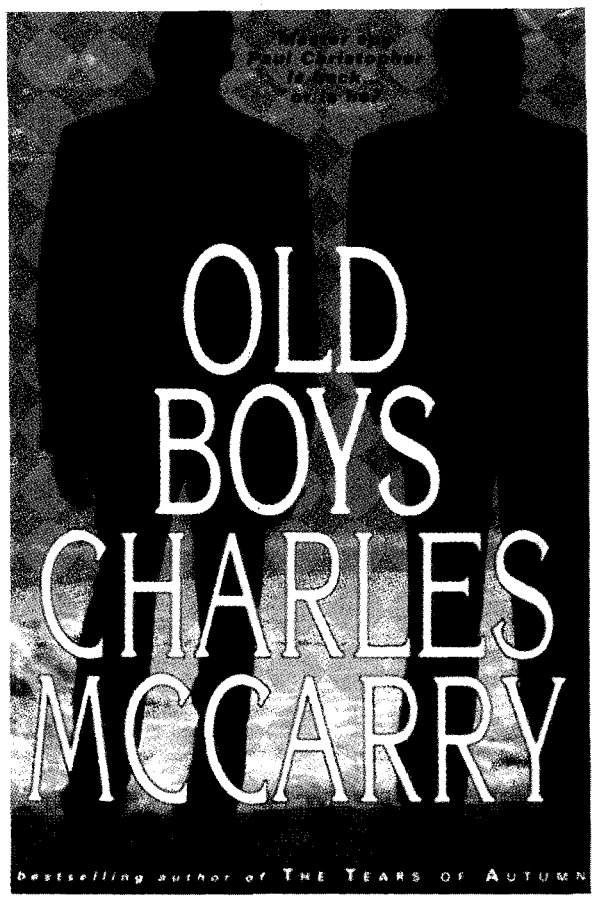
No Country for Old Men

Charles McCarry's gray-haired spies take a curtain call

By P.J. O'Rourke



I first heard of Charles McCarry in El Salvador during the civil war. I was in a bar known to be frequented by covert types, having a drink with a fellow from the U.S. embassy whose title was something like "trade attaché"—although he almost certainly wasn't, El Salvador having little trade in anything but weapons at the time. We were talking about the things American journalists and intelligence officers talk about when they're stuck in third-world sinkholes: intestinal disorders, souvenir shopping, local girls. The conversation turned to the ridiculous exaggerations of spy thrillers set in such places. My embassy acquaintance said, "You should read Charles McCarry. *His* stuff is *very* realistic." There was a nervous pause. "Not that I'd know," he added.

Back home, I read everything I could find of McCarry's, though finding it wasn't always easy. McCarry is the best modern writer on the subject of intrigue—by the breadth of Alan Furst, by the fathom of Eric Ambler, by any measure. Read Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed* or Conrad's *The Secret Agent* for worthwhile comparisons, and when you do, you'll see why McCarry has never achieved the popularity of John LeCarré, the author to whom he is most often compared.

McCarry has LeCarré's interest in ethical complexities and the tart style of LeCarré's early work. But, unlike John LeCarré, Charles McCarry knows right from wrong. His theme is never that the other side is just like our side except on the other side. McCarry's plots turn on the search for truth. The author and his heroes aren't in doubt about what the truth is: Good is good, and bad is bad.

That's not to say McCarry's characters are so Tom Clancy-flat as to be goody-good or bad, bad, bad. Even Paul Christopher—McCarry's recurring hero, a WASP Galahad—is wrong in his marriages. Paul's cousin, and Parsifal, Horace Hubbard, does wrong things for a dim King Arthur of a president. But Paul and Horace and everyone else McCarry gives us to admire *knows the difference*. The sophisticated reading public of today will forgive anything but moral certainty.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, all nine of McCarry's novels were out of print, and McCarry himself claimed to be retired. Then, this spring, Overlook Press announced the reissue of McCarry's fiction—along with one more, freshly crafted work, *Old Boys*.

I sat down in April to write a quick review of *Old Boys*. Now it's September. My gluttony, not my sloth, caused the delay. Since the publication of *The Miernik Dossier* in 1973, McCarry has been writing a *roman-fleuve*, a *recherche du temps perdu*, where the past is recalled by treachery, deceit, and interrogation rather than a taste of madeleine. (Excuse me for using so much French in a discussion of an author who knows right from wrong.) *Old Boys* is the final episode in the tale of Paul Christopher, his family, associates, lovers, and friends.

Paul Christopher is now in his late seventies. The others, when they aren't dead, are old enough to be so. (The exception is Paul's exotic daughter, Zarah, with whom, it is to be hoped, this *fleuve* will continue to the sea.) *Old Boys* is the brandy and cigar that closes the feast I've been having all summer, out on the screened porch, gin and tonic balanced on a stack of McCarry novels, while the garden went to weeds, the children became strangers, and the lawn grew three feet high.

It took me a week just to decide whether to reread the books in the order they were written or in the order of events. There's merit in the first plan. McCarry starts with just a sensible dislike of Kennedys. Then he casts a jaundiced eye on both Carteroid flakes and overreaching free market Reaganites. Finally he determines, as thoughtful people do, to cast a jaundiced eye on Republicans only—while spitting on their opponents:

> Like most political figures of his generation who embraced progressive convictions, [he] had never in his adult life been anything but a politician, . . . he

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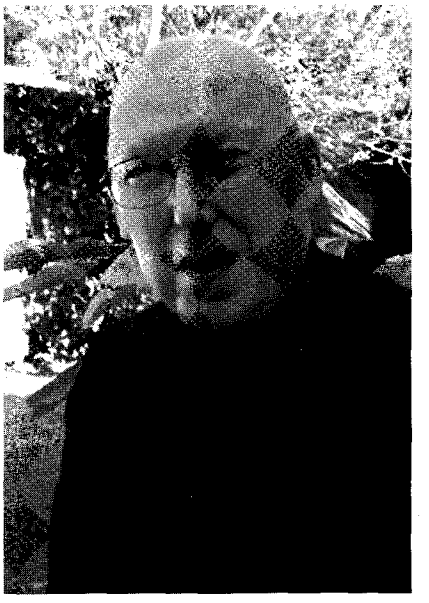
had never taken a mistress, fought a duel, or stood up for an unpopular cause. Every idea he ever espoused... brought him praise and approval among the opinion makers.

In the end, for the sake of getting the many and scattered dramatis personae better sorted in my head, I chose to read according to the fictional timeline:

- *The Miernik Dossier* (1973)—Bad information about bad Communists in the Cold War, circa 1959.
- *The Secret Lovers* (1977)—More bad information, this time about good truths about bad Communists in the Cold War, with flashbacks to really bad Communists in 1930s Spain.
- *The Tears of Autumn* (1974)—The Kennedy assassination featuring bad Vietnamese and worse Kennedys.
- *The Last Supper* (1983)—Bad moral equivalence in the mid-1970s and very bad Nazis in the 1940s.
- *Second Sight* (1991)—Bad Arabs in the 1980s when we thought they were our friends.
- *The Better Angels* (1979)—Theft of the 2000 election, although, in this case, by the wrong side.
- *Shelley's Heart* (1995)—The wrong side gets its comeuppance, betrayed by a bad cabal of lefties.
- *Old Boys* (2004)—Tired, graying good people save the world.

At any point while pursuing the list above, you can insert *The Bride of the Wilderness* (1988), set in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It provides a full saga-dose of Christopher family origins. *The Bride of the Wilderness* is a historical romance, not a thriller, and it's McCarry's least thrilling book—too historical, too romantic. But it explores how a noble Paul Christopher sort of chap is begotten. Here McCarry puts flesh on the bones of not only right, wrong, but other dying ideas. He may be the last fiction writer who loves the Establishment—its institutions, traditions, patriotisms, and bloodlines. This isn't a snob love. It's an Edmund Burke, Lord Macaulay, and Michael Oakeshott passion. When we lose history we gain histrionics. "The wholesale death of human beings in Vietnam and the extinction of the blue pike in Lake Erie brought her to the same level of frenzy," McCarry says of a "Movement chick" in *The Better Angels*. And we know the result when the artificial theatrics are directed by Pol Pot instead of overwrought American coeds.

By the time McCarry wrote *Shelley's Heart* (which *is* his most thrilling book), he was examining how the Establishment was dying by its own hand. The novel concerns a too-plausible white-shoe secret society at Yale, devoted to the political notions of that fool Percy Bysshe Shelley. We hear the interior monologue of a prominent Shelleyan:



Old Boys
by Charles McCarry
Overlook, 476 pp., $25.95

"A frontal assault on the Establishment could never succeed. It must be conquered camp by camp—first academia . . . then the news media, the churches, and the arts . . . then a whole new apparatus of special interest groups." Considering that it doesn't exist, this cell of Whiffenpoofs has made a lot of progress.

The Shelleyans take as their text the lines from *Prometheus Unbound*: *Man, one harmonious Soul of many a soul, / Whose nature is his own divine control.* Again, we know the results of bundling human souls into a *facis*. And every day we witness the self-selected elite of jerks setting itself up as the supreme being of the universe. This slob god takes the serpent's place in the Garden of Eden and stuffs Adam and Eve with applesauce, calls Moses to the mountaintop and delivers ten thousand commandments about what's sensitive and affirming and what's divisive and hurtful, and pollutes every gospel with the devil's thoughts: "In the beginning there's a word from our sponsor."

And yet, in this one respect, McCarry is a disestablishmentarian. He has no good word for organized religion. None of his major protagonists is a believer in the normal sense. I'd suspect the author of personal atheism if it weren't for his thorough understanding of the Bible and his recurring minor character Martha, a patient, decent Quaker mindful of the "inward light." This modest woman pipes up now and then, always profoundly: "They have made Mr. Nixon stand for evil and they think that all it takes to be virtuous is to hate him. It is the sin of pride."

Also, in theological matters, McCarry has a sense of humor—among faith's greatest blessings. An idea first mentioned in *The Miernik Dossier*, revisited in other books, and animating the plot of *Old Boys* is that Jesus was an unwitting tool of the Roman intelligence service with Judas running the covert action that became Christianity. Not that Christ wasn't also the son of God. The joke is on the Romans for their inability to see what the Hell—or Heaven—they were looking at.

McCarry gives one of his favorite characters, a man who in the course of the books becomes head of U.S. intelligence, this opinion: "Reality was poison. Too many people, over too many years, had failed to see the truth to be able to recognize it now." Paul Christopher's second wife thinks "secrets were usually fraudulent and almost always uninteresting." Charles McCarry was himself a CIA agent, under deep cover, in the 1950s, and he knows there are facts that intelligence agencies gather, and then, somewhere else, there is the truth.

For their fact-based factitiousness, McCarry detests the media: "In late twentieth-century Washington . . . a certain politicized segment of the news

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media exercised many of the functions belonging to the secret police in totalitarian countries." I wish it were *my* politicized segment of the news media. Think what fun we could have in the dungeon cellars of THE WEEKLY STANDARD with, say, Paul Krugman: "Krugman, Krugerrands—coincidence? We think not. Confess, Paul, that you've been burying South African gold coins in your backyard since 1972 or we'll expose you to our secondhand cigarette smoke."

McCarry is the only spy novelist who agrees with John Keegan's pessimistic assessment of the worth of intelligence operations. In McCarry adventures it is wisdom, strength of character, and moral rectitude that win the day, not sneaking around. And win the day they do, at least after *The Last Supper*. McCarry is the only novelist of any kind who becomes more optimistic as he ages. In *Shelley's Heart* the Speaker of the House, a principled old blue dog Democrat, drinks himself to death to save the nation—the kind of wisdom, strength, and rectitude with which we middle-aged men can identify.

McCarry manages this optimism even in the face of a historical figure, who won the day without sagacity, spine, or the virtues of even a weasel in rut. Every inch (including the inches Monica Lewinsky knew) of this well-known, lip-biting, finger-pointing, raspy-voiced personage is portrayed in *Lucky Bastard* (1998), with the slightest fictionalization. It's the one McCarry novel that takes place outside the Paul Christopher cosmos and shares no characters or action with its mates.

I saved this, my favorite McCarry book, to cheer the melancholy end of August, its waning days forever soured by the scent of back-to-school. And, in political-science terms, it's quite a schooling McCarry gives: "The American people in their mystical wisdom had lifted up this sociopath, this liar, this rapist, this hollow man beloved by lunatics and traitors, and made him the most powerful human being in the world."

The characters in *Lucky Bastard* mostly fall into two loathsome categories. There are the true believers in liberalism: "They defended Hiss's innocence as if it were their own, which of course it was. . . . They are the unconscious underground, demanding no support, requiring no instruction, driven by blind faith." And there are the true believers in that thing which underlies liberalism, that rotten confection at the core of the progressive Tootsie-Pop: "The purpose of the environmental movement is not to save the f—ing environment. Its purpose is to demonstrate the crimes and failures of capitalism. Just like every other component of the cause."

But McCarry makes one of these true believers his narrator. The story is told by an aging spy, a genuine Marxist who is, for all that he's a lifelong enemy of America, a decent guy. It is one thing to be a person with bad beliefs. It's another thing to be the man McCarry calls "John (Jack) Fitzgerald Adams."

The premise is that Jack, who is elected president of the United States, has been, since his college days, a Soviet agent. And that Jack's feminist harridan wife is actually his KGB handler. I suppose you have a better explanation for the Clintons?

We go from small town trashy origins to electoral triumph by way of used-up friends, cut rate, and venal and venereal scandals. But McCarry does not end his book with the former chief executive hogging the bestseller list, waxing on the lecture circuit, and basking, Hiss-like, in the admiration of the unconscious underground. Nor is the ex-First Lady a carrion bird on her nest in the Senate waiting to pounce upon whatever worthy aspect of the Republic next becomes road kill. McCarry is too jolly for that.

Instead, the Marxist narrator/spy (now double-crossed by glasnost and Jack Adams) and the KGB handler/wife (now furious with her "asset") help an ex-prom-queen Republican to . . . How do I put this in a family magazine? Before the dreadful inauguration of Jack occurs, the plucky Republican gal lures the president-elect into kinky sex. Undetectable ricin poison winds up in a pre-presidential orifice. The villain's end is rendered appropriate to his means.

And *Old Boys* has a conclusion that's every bit as appropriate—if somewhat more mature, as befits its more mature characters. It would be inappropriate to give that conclusion away. But, if the reader of *Old Boys* will forgive me, I'll say that not everyone lives happily ever after. In the world of Charles McCarry, where there's a genuine difference between right and wrong, not everyone deserves to. ♦

A Sovereign Nation?

Jeremy Rabkin makes the case for American independence. BY ADAM WOLFSON

The leading ideas that animate a society tend to become clear only in times of crisis—and the run-up to the war in Iraq was exactly such a crisis. The White House believed that Saddam Hussein's Iraq posed a gathering and potentially mortal threat to the United States. In considerable detail President Bush and his advisers laid out their case, and eventually received congressional authorization to use lethal force against Hussein's regime. But rather than going immediately to war, the administration proceeded to seek additional authorization—this time from the

The Case for Sovereignty
Why The World Should Welcome American Independence
by Jeremy A. Rabkin
AEI, 257 pp., $25

Adam Wolfson is editor of the Public Interest.

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United Nations. The administration did so because skeptics both here and abroad insisted that without the U.N.'s approval the war would be illegal and unjust.

Now here was a strange and novel doctrine. America apparently had no right to defend herself without the approval of China, Russia, France, Belgium, and Cameroon. Whatever one thought of the war itself, it was hard to see how it either gained or lost moral legitimacy from a U.N. headcount. Yet such had become the case. Long before the Iraq war, the good old American doctrine of sovereignty had lost out in a below-the-radar war of ideas. How this great transformation from national sovereignty to global governance came about and what it portends for the future are the subjects of Jeremy Rabkin's insightful new book *The Case for Sovereignty: Why The World Should Welcome American Independence*.

A professor at Cornell University, Rabkin has written a fiercely argued defense of sovereignty. The book is meticulously footnoted and scholarly in its discussion of the likes of Hugo Grotius, Jean Bodin, and the *Federalist Papers*, as well as contemporary trade agreements, treaties, and international jurisprudence. But the book is clearly meant to be read not so much by scholars as citizens—by Americans who want to understand the movements in intellectual plate tectonics that have of late put their country on the moral and political defensive. And if the book is written for citizens, it is also written by one. Rabkin does not write in scholarly detachment but as one who palpably fears for the future of his country.

Today, because the United States failed to win U.N. authorization for its use of force, the Iraq war is widely viewed among both European and American liberals as an illegal, immoral war. It's tempting to chalk this up to mere politics or resentment against American power. Yes, France wants to serve as the great counterweight to the American "hyperpower," and Democrats long for a Kerry victory in November. But, as Rabkin demonstrates, deeper forces are at play. A moral revolution has taken place over the last several decades, one that rejects the notion of national sovereignty. What's needed, Rabkin believes, is not merely a political argument in favor of Bush's foreign policy, but a moral defense of the idea of sovereignty, as such. Only then will America's recent actions be seen in their proper context and thus become intellectually respectable and morally defensible.

This is the service Rabkin's book performs. *The Case for Sovereignty* provides us with a historical and intellectual genealogy of the idea of sovereignty, as well as its would-be replacement, global governance. Today, as Rabkin concedes, national sovereignty is widely thought to be a selfish concept and, worse, the cause of conflict among nations. It is also thought to be anti-democratic and chauvinistic. Yet, by means of several forays into intellectual history, Rabkin shows this to be utterly mistaken. Sovereignty is the friend of democracy, human rights, and political pluralism, while global governance is the abettor of dictatorship, lost rights, and a worldwide political monoculture.

In the history of political thought, sovereignty is a relatively new idea. It emerged only with the Enlightenment. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europe was wracked by unlimited wars. Crusading, transcendent faiths—religious and other—demanded universal allegiance. Borders were of no consequence. It was to impose order on this dire situation that the idea of sovereignty was first invented by such early thinkers as Grotius and Bodin, among others. They viewed it as a way of consolidating and confining political power and thereby limiting the reach and effects of war. Thus, in their treatises, these political philosophers attempted to identify what was essential to the proper exercise of sovereignty: the power to make laws, the power to tax, and the power to declare war as well as to terminate hostilities. The lists were long and varied, but as Rabkin recounts, the attributes of sovereignty were neatly summarized hundreds of years later by Abraham Lincoln when, in defense of the rights of the Union, he declared sovereignty must mean at the very least "a political community, without a political superior."

The acceptance of the idea of sovereignty led over time to the formation and spread of nation-states—which are powerful political units indeed and not always to the good, as nationalism is a sword that a variety of dictators and adventurers would find useful. But sovereignty has worked, Rabkin argues, most of all as the handmaiden of many of our most cherished liberal democratic ideals. It encouraged the growth of democracy, particularly by enforcing the notion that consent of individuals is the ultimate source of

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political authority. It allowed political pluralism to flourish. It cultivated the ideal of religious toleration, with citizenship open to all consenting individuals regardless of faith. And it has been the friend of limited government, since sovereignty begins with the rights of individuals.

Rabkin calls this "the moral argument for sovereignty," and the alternative mode of organizing political life, he argues, has always been a "crusading faith"—as demonstrated, most recently, in the liberal dream of global governance. Rabkin provides a useful service by showing just how similar the contemporary European left's arguments in favor of international lawmaking and global rule sound to those of old Nazi propagandists. He dryly notes that Hitler too dreamed of a united Europe free of warring states.

Rabkin draws polemical advantage from these parallels, but as he also shows there is real substance to the charge. If the political community is not to be defined by national constitutional forms and structures, then other ties will inevitably compete for people's allegiance. All too often, it seems, racial identity becomes the fulcrum of political identity, as in fact happened in the 1930s and 1940s. Similarly today, as Rabkin also notes, "with so much political authority delegated to supranational bureaucrats, national identity came increasingly [in Europe] to be conceived in cultural or ethnic terms." Utopian universalism seems always to breed its opposite—the worst extremes in ethnic particularism.

The problem is not simply a European one, or a matter of pesky French diplomats trying to delegitimize American actions in the forums of the United Nations. Far more subversively, the global governance project is working to overcome sovereignty from within. Rabkin catalogs the many and varied ways American judges have begun to undermine America as a sovereign constitutional republic. Though the Constitution explicitly declares itself to be "the supreme Law of the Land," and though judges are sworn to uphold it as such, they increasingly appeal to international understandings and foreign court decisions as determinative. Even the Supreme Court has done so.

The assaults on American sovereignty by Euro-diplomats and American law professors can seem to be, as Rabkin concedes, "simply a matter of legal technicalities." But, as he is at pains to point out, much more is at stake, and the public needs to pay attention. "It is about preserving a structure under which Americans—in all their diversity, with all their rights, and all their differences of opinion—can live together in confidence and mutual respect, as fellow citizens of the same solid republic."

To see what's truly at issue try this thought experiment: What if the European left and global-governance zealots were to achieve their aims? How would our constitutional republic be transformed? Global governance means that we'll no longer live under laws passed by our elected representatives, but under evolving standards set by international diplomats. How each of us makes a living will be subject to decisions by World Trade Organization appellate judges. National economic development and growth will be dictated by the likes of the draconian Kyoto Protocol. The moral standards by which we live—for example, the legality of the death penalty in America—will be forced into compliance with French sentiment. And finally, when and how to defend our country will be left up to Kofi Annan and other U.N. bureaucrats.

This is not self-government, but national suicide. Rabkin's alarm bell should be heard and heeded. ♦

School Wars

The two sides of the education debate.

BY JUSTIN TORRES

Seasons come and seasons go, but the education mess endures. Of the nation's fourth- and eighth-grade public-school students, only a third are "proficient" in reading or math, as defined by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. (Math scores have been on a slight but unmistakable upswing since 1990, but reading scores have remained stubbornly flat.)

And the achievement gap between poor and minority students on the one hand, and their white, wealthier fellows on the other, remains appallingly wide and seemingly impervious to efforts to narrow it. The average African-American twelfth-grade student, for example, reads at an eighth-grade level.

Justin Torres is a research director at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, a K-12 education reform organization, and a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

With the education mess come the education wars, which also have a life of their own. On one side are the vast majority of educators, administrators, and education specialists. They all come out of the progressive tradition of John Dewey, and they explain the present system's shortcomings as largely the result of inadequate funding and a reflection of the larger society's inequities. On the other side are education reformers of a traditionalist bent, who would remake the system with school-choice schemes, or reforms designed to wring efficiencies out of the vast bureaucratic wasteland that is public education. The battle has been going for two decades, with traditionalists making halting gains but no real victory in sight.

Two recent books, Frederick Hess's *Common Sense School Reform* and Richard Rothstein's *Class and Schools*, are new skirmishes in this war. Both books attempt to get at the root of our

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education problems. Rather than dealing with particular issues (Is teacher tenure good? What do we think about high-stakes testing?), Hess and Rothstein both present top-to-bottom reform packages—and the fact that they are in many ways diametrically opposed shows just how entrenched the two sides of the education wars are.

Common Sense School Reform is uncompromising. Hess, an education-policy expert at the American Enterprise Institute, takes direct aim at gauzy notions and sentiments that divert us from enacting needed reforms. Many will find shocking his direct attack on the idea that teachers are doing all they can to improve student achievement. Bunk, he says. In fact, while many teachers *are* working as hard as they can, many aren't.

Many are themselves so poorly educated they aren't up to the task of raising student achievement. And those who are up to the task still need external incentives—performance measures, bonuses for improved performance, and penalties for falling short—that Americans take for granted in other professions. "Educators, for better or worse, are a lot like everybody else," Hess writes. "Some educators are passionately committed to their craft, highly skilled, and will be so regardless of rewards or guidance, but most—like most engineers and attorneys and journalists and doctors—will be more effective when held accountable for performance."

Common Sense School Reform is shot through with hard-nosed realism. Unlike some proponents of high standards and increased accountability, Hess admits that such measures can have the unfortunate effect of narrowing the curriculum and limiting the additional touches—a focus on science or the arts, say—that can help distinguish schools and provide the personalizing touches that parents crave. (There is already some evidence that the No Child Left Behind Act, with its relentless focus on reading and math and, eventually, science, is crowding out art, history, and foreign-language classes.)

For Hess, the answer to this curricular narrowing is school choice, designed to allow parents to choose a tailored curriculum that operates in a larger framework of high standards and accountability. Choice will also help to spur school improvement by rewarding innovators who can deliver educational success—*if* choice rewards popular schools with additional resources and punishes persistently low-achieving schools with closure or reconstitution. (The second half of Hess's formulation, closing down schools that lose students in a competitive marketplace, has not yet been tried in any of the voucher programs presently in operation.)

It's a beguiling vision, and certainly one that would be a vast improvement over the present system, which actually punishes success by placing strains on popular, over-enrolled schools. As Hess points out, an innovative and dynamic principal who attracts a hundred extra students may be assigned two or three additional teaching slots and may get a little discretionary money to spend on new programs or additional teacher training. But most of the important decisions—who to hire; whether to put resources into physical plant, new personnel, or new books and teaching aids; the length of the school day; the hours teachers work—are dictated by collective bargaining agreements or are handed down from the district office. That offers little incentive to innovators, and a growing student body becomes a headache, not an indicator of success.

Common Sense School Reform
by Frederick M. Hess
Palgrave Macmillan, 272 pp., $26.95

Class and Schools
Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap
by Richard Rothstein
Economic Policy Institute, 210 pp., $17.95

If Hess represents one side of the education debate, Richard Rothstein represents the other. Schools, he says in *Class and Schools*, cannot be viewed outside their larger social context. For Rothstein, social class is an irreducible reality; students come to school the products of cultures with different methods of child rearing, different opportunities for academic and social enrichment, and different attitudes toward schooling. "The influence of social class characteristics is probably so powerful that schools cannot overcome it, no matter how well trained are their teachers and no matter how well designed are their instructional programs and climates," he writes.

For Rothstein, a former *New York Times* education columnist now at Columbia Teachers College, school reforms are destined to fail if they are not accompanied by full-scale social reforms that seek to equalize differences in social class. For example, lower-class parents, he notes, use far fewer words in conversation with their young children; they read fewer and easier books to their children; and when they do read, they often ask factual questions about the reading—"What happened? What is that picture?"—rather than open-ended questions that spark creative answers and higher-order thinking. And Rothstein shows how not just income but wealth, usually in the form of longtime home ownership, provides middle- and upper-class parents with resources to enrich a child's learning, such as music, the arts, and foreign languages.

Individual pieces of Rothstein's analysis make sense. He reports on studies that show that providing optometric exams and glasses to low-income students has more immediate effect on reading and math scores than instructional or curricular reforms. And there is no doubt that income and wealth affect student achievement, by allowing some students opportunities that others don't have—opportunities deeply ingrained and built up over generations.

That said, what are we to do about it? Massive federal interventions with the intent of redistributing income, the sorts of programs that would be required to correct the wealth imbalance Rothstein identifies, have a poor track record, to say the least. The idea

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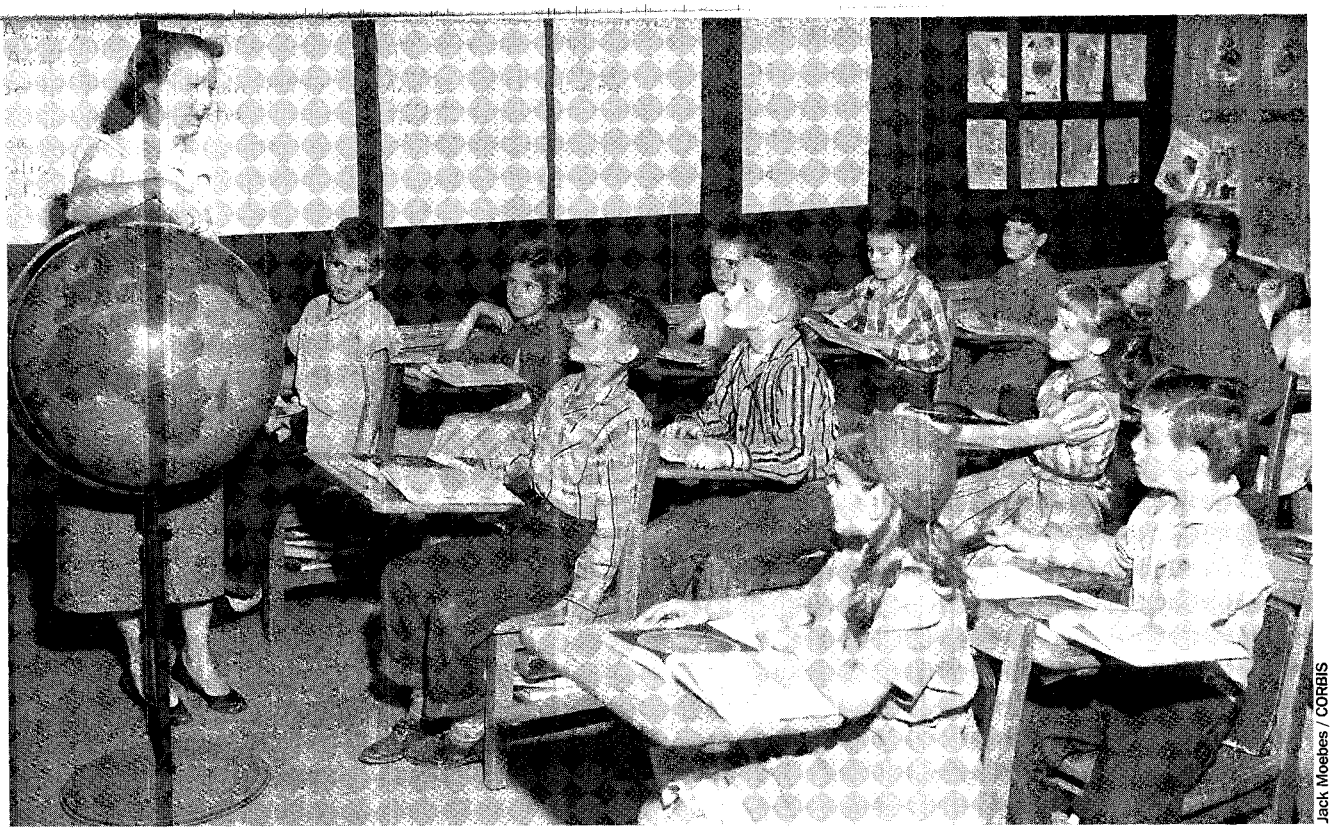

Jack Moebes / CORBIS

of an efficient, carefully targeted program of redistribution that avoids the unintended consequences and bureaucratic sclerosis of the past remains a dream. Rothstein's argument is more complicated than the old saw that school reform must wait until social reform has been achieved; he is willing to concede that school reforms can have some effect on student achievement at the margin. But his argument isn't *much* more complicated than that. In the end, Rothstein would have us wait to reform our schools until a promised land of egalitarianism and class leveling has arrived. For kids in failing schools, that will be a long wait.

What makes Rothstein's argument unsatisfying is that the school reforms he dismisses as merely tinkering at the edges of the achievement problem aren't failures. In fact, they haven't really been tried, at least in any systematic way. The standards-and-testing approach of the No Child Left Behind Act, which Rothstein abhors, is barely two years old. And while standards have been in place in many states for a decade and a half, it has taken time and multiple fits and starts to improve their rigor. It has taken even more time to develop full packages of standards, well-aligned tests that are true assessments of learning, and accountability systems that are serious spurs to improved performance. In fact, even in the age of NCLB, few states have a decent system of standards, testing, and accountability measures in place.

Meanwhile, educational choice through charter schools, vouchers, and tuition tax credits is growing fitfully, but nowhere does it yet represent a true competitive force whose success can spur improvements in traditional public schools by threatening funding. (A case in point: the much-ballyhooed D.C. vouchers program actually *rewards* schools that lose students through choice with additional resources, free of strings—a perverse incentive if ever there was one.) And a number of important personnel and management reforms loathed by administrators and teachers' unions, such as ending tenure, reforming teacher education, and opening up accreditation processes, have never even gotten off the ground. So, it's a bit much for Rothstein to knock school reform as a failure if it largely remains an aspiration.

The federal government, in its lumbering but decisive way, has developed a response to persistent school failure with the 2001 No Child Left Behind system. Many of the act's goals, such as the dictate that every student be proficient in reading and math by 2014, are laudable. But the demands for rigorous testing, higher standards, and increased expectations have also raised an important question: Can we expect inefficient schools to make gains without systematic reforms to the way they do business? The No Child Left Behind Act has put new incentives for schools, states, and districts in place—but the force of those incentives (and concomitant punitive measures) remains blunted by collective bargaining agreements, tenure systems, and teacher education programs that strictly limit what we can expect from teachers and school administrators. In the end, the greatest accomplishment of No Child Left Behind may turn out to be a new awareness of just how far we have to go in remaking our schools.

That's not to say we need to go as far as Richard Rothstein would have us go—in his *Class and Schools*, there's little hope of good schooling short of the apocalyptic remaking of the whole society. But reform is also not quite the simple, easy thing envisioned by Frederick Hess in *Common Sense School Reform*. And so the education wars roil on. ◆

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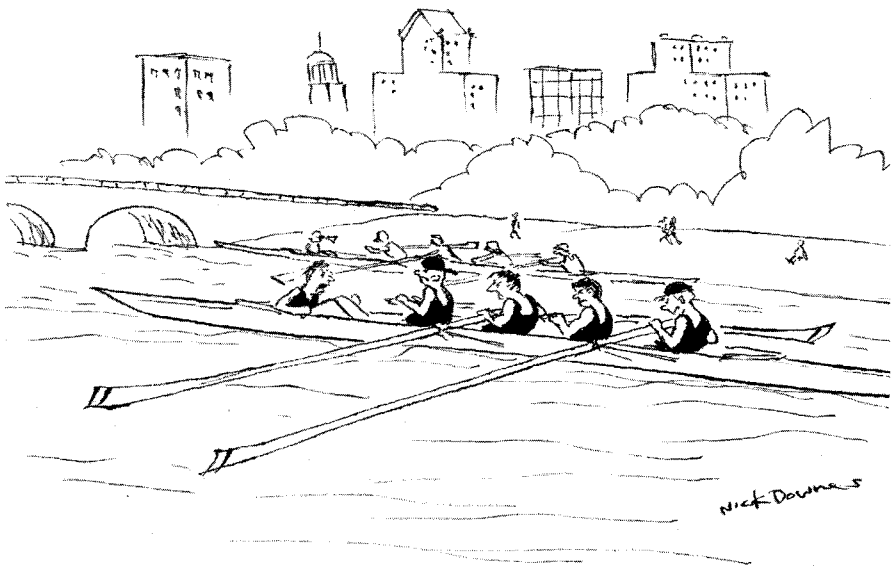

"I said gently *down the stream!"*

Books in Brief

***My Name is Bill* by Susan Cheever (Simon & Schuster, 306 pp., $24.00).** Bill Wilson is the most influential American you've never heard of—unless you're a recovering alcoholic. Wilson, a near-hopeless drunk, founded Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935. The key to sobering up, he had learned, was not sheer will power but finding God.

"In Bill Wilson's story it is clear that alcohol is astonishingly powerful and that the only thing which can stop its course for an alcoholic is an experience of God, a spiritual awakening, a surrender of the rational mind," explains Susan Cheever. The daughter of novelist John Cheever, she wrote about her own struggle with alcoholism in *Note Found in a Bottle*. But this book is all about Wilson, not her. It's an admirable biography, both readable and revealing.

Wilson had a roller-coaster life. Born in Vermont in 1895, he had his first drink as an Army officer in World War I, was a shrewd stock analyst and investor in the 1920s, and lost everything because of his drinking. He formed AA with an Ohio doctor named Bob Smith, also a drinker seeking to stop. AA grew slowly until Wilson's book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, was published in 1939 and AA began to get favorable press attention during World War II. Wilson was a tireless proselytizer and mesmerizing speaker. His second book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, came out in 1953. When he retired as head of AA in 1955, it was an international organization.

Wilson was no saint. Rumors of womanizing dogged him for years, and he tried LSD in the 1950s. Wilson was a conservative Republican throughout his life and a Christian of sorts, but not a churchgoer. But with the twelve-step approach he instituted and popularized worldwide, Wilson may have saved more lives than anyone in the twentieth century.

—Fred Barnes

***Boomer Nation: The Largest and Richest Generation Ever, and How It Changed America* by Steve Gillon (Free Press, 344 pp., $27.50).** The subtitle tells you everything you need to know about *Boomer Nation*. It's entirely true, and utterly uncontroversial. *Every* new generation is larger and richer than the one that precedes it, at least in modern times. And every generation changes America. Boomers are just particularly enamored with examining the results of their handiwork.

Boomer Nation is just the latest contribution to the literature on how "boomers discovered sex, drugs, activism, and self-absorbed television programming." Only the occasional neat factoid—"In 1940, only 11 percent of women and 20 percent of men agreed with the statement, 'I am an important person.' By 1990 over 60 percent of both sexes agreed with the statement"—keeps the reader from abandoning *Boomer Nation* altogether. The interesting statistical tidbits do flow freely, though: The word "lifestyle," for example, first appeared in *Webster's* dictionary in 1961. Another double-take inducing line: "By the time they were age 21, most Boomers had seen more than 300,000 commercials."

Gillon looks at the boomer phenomenon through the groovy John Lennon glasses of six individuals: four semi-famous, two relatively obscure. They seem to have muddled along, as most real boomers do. Still, "the largest and richest generation ever" continues to generate interesting statistics: "In the three weeks following its introduction in 1998, the little blue pill [Viagra] accounted for 94 percent of all doctor prescriptions in the United States."

—Katherine Mangu-Ward

***Skinny Dip* by Carl Hiaasen (Knopf, 355 pp., $24.95).** The cover jacket of Hiaasen's latest romp in the cultural backwaters of Florida appears to have been designed to match the contents of a beach bag. Pink-bordered with a pastel palette, its one image is of a tired-looking blonde bobbing in the ocean—the drawing cleverly suggesting that under the water, she is, like, totally naked.

Another tip-off that this book wants to be liked is how likable its characters

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are. The damsel in distress—true-hearted, smart, and great looking—has but one flaw: a weakness for jerks, like her husband who tried to murder her by throwing her off the deck of a moving cruise ship. But since this is the opening event of the book, one never has to witness her, say, making house with such an inconsiderate spouse. Her collaborator in revenge is another person too good for the cards he was dealt, a sweetly grizzled retired cop women routinely fall for, and then try to change.

But if Hiaasen makes money with his congenial characters, he makes art with his uncongenial characters, like "the man called Tool." A large fellow, Tool is semiretired from his job as a crew boss mistreating Mexican hands for a corrupt corporate farm business. He lives in a trailer on a half acre of land, which he decorates with little white crosses taken from those highway-side memorials people build to mark where their loved ones perished. The reason Tool is semiretired is that a bullet remains lodged in his buttocks from a hunter who mistook him for a bear.

The plot is half revenge scheme, half Everglades environmental scandal. But it's the character details that distinguish *Skinny Dip*, especially the tics of the bad guys—Tool stealing pain medication from nursing home patients, the husband's endless sexual preoccupations—as well as Hiaasen's generally light touch.

—David Skinner

***The Untold Story: My Twenty Years Running the* National Enquirer by Iain Calder (Miramax, 336 pp., $24.95).** American scandal journalism began in 1924 with the *New York Graphic*, a tabloid sometimes called "the New York pornographic." The *Graphic* was the creature of Bernarr Macfadden, eccentric bodybuilder and publisher of such journals as *Physical Culture* and *True Story*. One of the *Graphic*'s contributions to journalism was the "composograph," a composite picture with the heads of celebrities superimposed on models. The art department maintained a studio that processed such fabrications as Rudolph Valentino on the operating table and courtroom scenes of sensational divorce cases.

Alas, the *Graphic* died in 1932. But the void in scandal-mongering was filled by *Confidential*, a scabrous 1950s journal that specialized in smearing Hollywood celebrities. While the *Graphic* was coarse but good natured, *Confidential* went for the jugular and was defanged only by a lawsuit brought by the California attorney general.

Which brings us to the *National Enquirer*, the subject of Iain Calder's new memoir, *The Untold Story: My Twenty Years Running the* National Enquirer. The *Enquirer* began life as a spooks-and-gore journal, covering flaky phenomena like UFOs and items of inhuman interest. ("Mom uses son's face as ashtray.") But it eventually began to employ its aggressive technique to dredge for legitimate news. Political strategist Lee Atwater is said to have regarded it as "the pulse of America."

The paper's publisher was Generoso Pope Jr., whose family published the Italian language newspaper *Il Progresso*. Pope—described by Calder in *The Untold Story* as a "genius"—gave the *Enquirer* its format and transplanted it from London to New York, where it ballooned into a phenomenal success. The issue featuring a photo of Elvis Presley's corpse in an open casket, for instance, sold 6.7 million copies—outselling *Time* magazine by 2 million. To get the shot, the *Enquirer* bribed one of the mourners and supplied him with a disposable flash camera.

Calder, the tabloid's longtime editor-in-chief, attributes much of its success to morbid curiosity. ("When a celebrity dies in unusual circumstances, people just can't get enough.") The famous dead who inspired sellout issues included Liberace, Princess Grace, John Lennon, and Natalie Wood. Another posthumous sensation was a photograph that revealed Judy Garland's continued interment in an undertaker's morgue eight months after her death. The front-page picture showed Calder pointing at a temporary crypt under a headline that read "Judy Garland Is Still Not Buried." The issue, says Calder, created "an international furor."

The tabloid's talent as a bottom feeder produced some literal scoops. One involved the household garbage of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, inspected by an ingenious *Enquirer* operative. It was found to contain "hundreds of Secret Service documents." The State Department was outraged. But the only outcome of note was a local ordinance in Beverly Hills making it illegal for unauthorized personnel to pick up garbage.

The *Enquirer* reached further with its spectacular coverage of the O.J. Simpson case, which was ideally suited to the tabloid's checkbook journalism and saturation reportage. ("We probably spoke to more witnesses than the cops, which is why we regularly uncovered material they missed.") The tabloid found significant material, including the provenance of the murder weapon and O.J.'s designer shoes, and the *New York Times* acknowledged the *Enquirer* as "the bible of the O.J. Simpson case."

The *Graphic* and *Confidential* are gone, and the *Enquirer* was a near fatality when it went to press with an unfortunate Princess Di smear on the day of her death in a car crash. The unlucky misjudgment is said to have cost the paper a drop in circulation of 250,000 a week. But *National Enquirer* survived—indeed, has grown to resemble the mainstream media. Of course, that may be only because the mainstream media have begun to resemble the *National Enquirer*.

—Martin Levin

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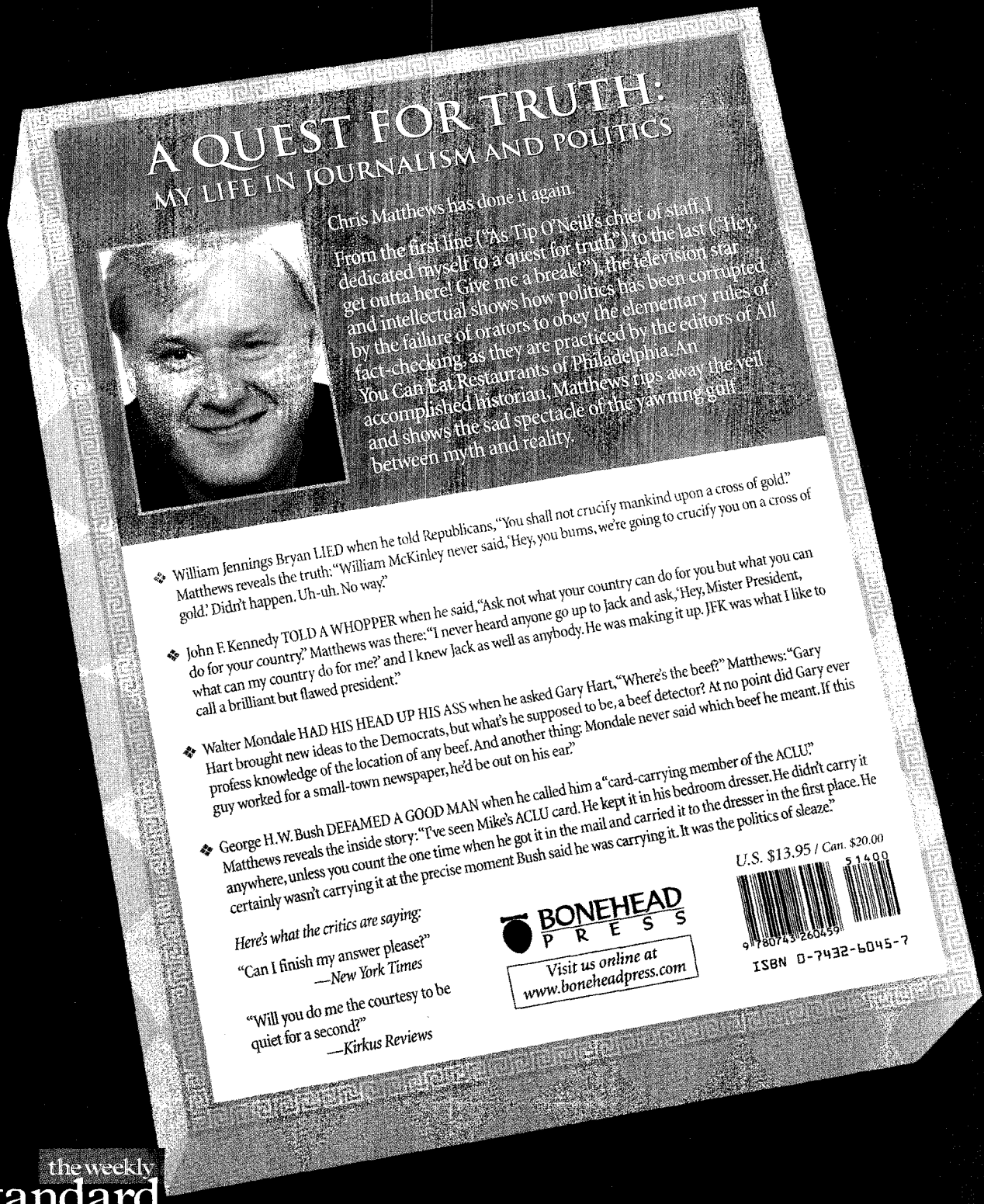
Parody

***CHRIS MATTHEWS*: Okay. Do you believe now—do you believe, Senator, truthfully, that John Kerry wants to defend the country with spitballs? Do you believe that?**
***ZELL MILLER*: That was a metaphor, wasn't it? Do you know what a metaphor is?**
***MATTHEWS*: Well, what do you mean by a metaphor?**
—MSNBC's *Hardball*, Sept. 1, 2004



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—Clint Bolick

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If you ask Democrats what we should do in the war on terrorism, they essentially say we should be sitting on our docks inspecting containers as they arrive. That is a nice idea, but it is not how you win the war on terror. And it is the absence of any policy to counter the vision and the boldness of the Bush Doctrine that I think is the weakest element of the Democratic position. . . .

It is a fact that for two and a half years we have not had an attack on our soil. No one wants to say this in public, and no one writes about it, because everyone is worried an attack is going to happen tomorrow. But if you had asked anyone in Washington or elsewhere on September 12, 2001, whether we could avoid attacks for two and a half years, no one would have thought it possible. Either this is a pure accident of history, or we have been doing something right. We took the war to the enemy, we denied him sanctuary, we scattered him, and we sent a message to every other country in the region: If you help these guys, we are going to get you.

—Charles Krauthammer

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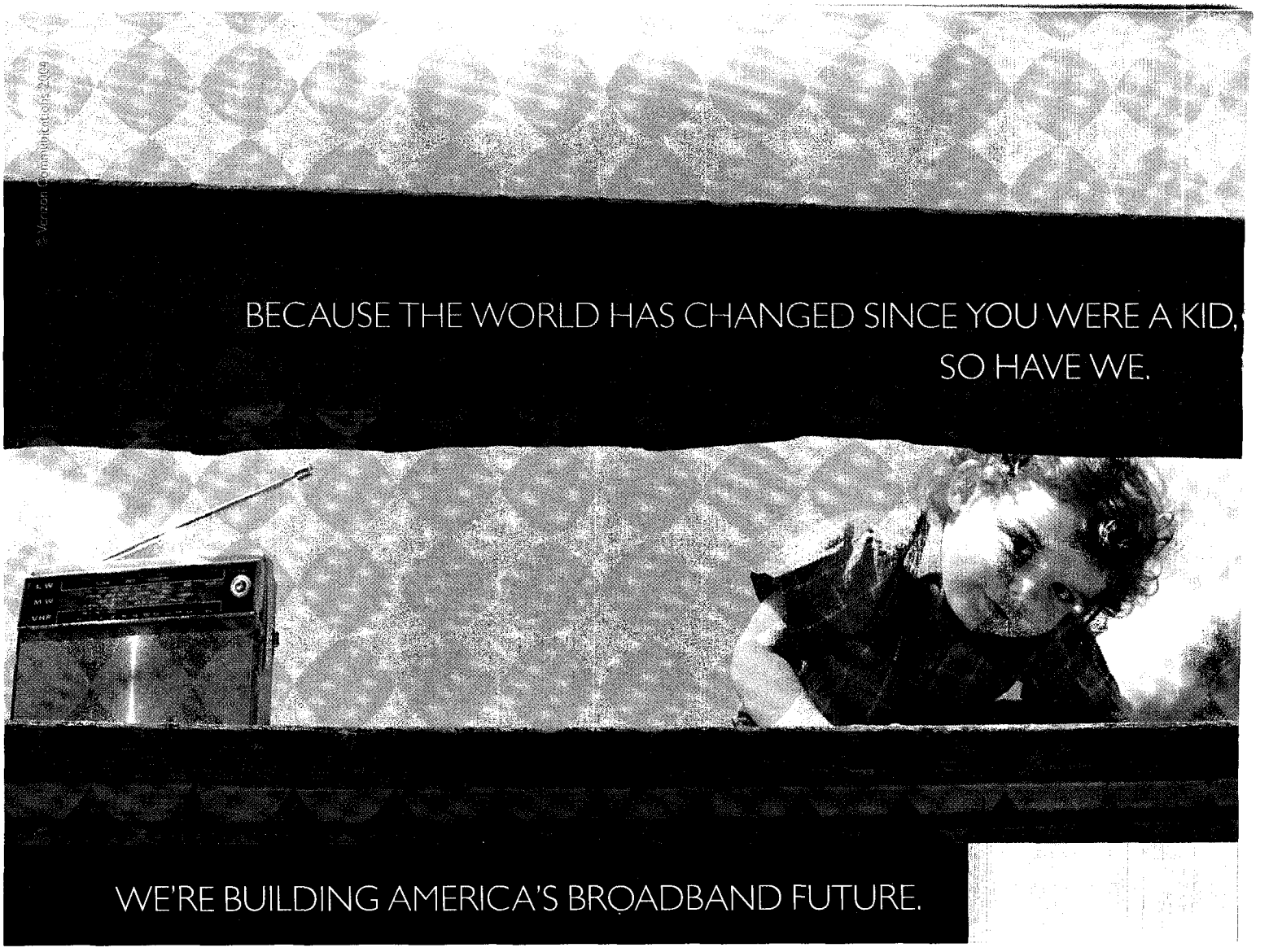

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